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BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

BUFFALO BILL'S WINNING HAND;

Or, The Masked Woman of the Colorado Canyon.



"IT IS TRUMPET TOM," CRIED BUFFALO BILL. "DEAD, AND FOR A LONG TIME, FOR HE IS CLAMMY COLD."

Buffalo Bill's Winning Hand;

OR,

THE MASKED WOMAN OF THE COLORADO CANYON.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF THE "BUFFALO BILL" BORDER
ROMANCES AND OTHER STORIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRISONER'S PLEDGE.

THOUGH a story of the Wild West of the United States, and bringing into a romance, founded upon stern reality, the names of men famous in this country and abroad, my first scene opens in England—in an English prison.

In a cell wherein only streams a ray of sunlight, enough to mock the brightness without, sits a man loaded with chains.

It is the death cell, and he is under sentence to die.

He is a man whose appearance is in his favor, so far as a certain nobility of expression is concerned, a splendid physique and upright bearing, while his face is a very handsome one.

But closely analyzed his features reveal the stamp of a reckless nature, a cynical look hovering about his mouth, while the seal of a dissipated life shows distinctly, marring slightly his otherwise intelligent, handsome face.

The sound of feet and voices outside the corridor aroused him from the deep meditation he was in, and a moment after a woman appears as the door is opened by the keeper, who says in his blunt way:

"A visitor to see you, Tremain, and she says that she is your mother, though you told me you had no parents."

"Nor have I," was the response of the prisoner, who, however, gazed with considerable interest at the visitor, who stood calmly regarding him through a thick veil that she wore.

"You have thought that both your parents were dead, my son; but will you say that I am not your mother once you have looked me in the face?"

"Will not memory prove true and you recall the one who cared for you in childhood, in boyhood, until you ran away and went to sea?"

"As your mother, and I took oath to it. I was only admitted here, for you are on the death list, as you know."

"But now look into my face and deny that you are my son, Villers Tremain!"

She had spoken most pathetically, and the keeper had tarried to hear her words, evidently touched by the almost despair in her tones.

"Raise your veil," the prisoner almost commanded, showing no softening of his stern manner, no feeling for her.

She did raise her veil, in fact, threw it suddenly back, and the jailer saw the man start at sight of it; yes, and he saw more, for he beheld a beautiful face, one with golden hair, large dark eyes, perfect teeth, and in fact a face to fascinate at a glance.

She must have been past forty by several years, to be the mother of the prisoner, who was all of twenty-six, and yet she scarcely looked over thirty.

The face was sad now, and full of pleading, as her eyes were turned upon the prisoner with a look in which there was a world of expression, a dread that he might not recognize her.

But, when he had looked into her face an instant he cried suddenly, as he held out his manacled arms:

"Mother, yes, you are now my mother, for memory does not play me false, though I believed you dead long ago."

She sprung forward and threw her arms about the prisoner, while the keeper turned quickly away and closed the door, muttering to himself:

"There is no doubt now—the woman is his mother."

The steps of the receding keeper died away and then the man suddenly freed himself from the woman's embrace while he stood

an instant regarding her closely and then said:

"Yes, I recognize you now, though it has been a long time since last we met."

"I saw in your look that you meant that I should play my cards as you led, and I did so."

"Well, have you come to gloat over your work, for you made me what I am, you brought me here, to die upon the gallows for my crimes, or rather one crime, though I have been guilty of many that would hang me, thanks to your motherly training in the long ago."

"You do not know that I am not your mother," she said in reply, speaking in a low tone.

"I know only what you told me in the past, that you were not my mother, and I have proof that you are not."

"What proof?" she asked excitedly.

"The proof is that no mother would deliberately teach her son to sin, urge him on to a life of crime, as you did me."

"I was prompted by revenge against one I hated with all my heart."

"Your love for your son should have been stronger than your hate for one who was not your flesh and blood."

"He was one I loved, and who should have made me his wife."

"But he was false and my love turned to hate, so I sought revenge."

"And I was the innocent victim?"

"Granted that I wronged you, by encouraging you to a life of crime, I have now come to make amends, to more than redeem you."

"What do you mean, woman?"

"I mean that I wish your solemn pledge, your sacred oath, to do as I command you, and I will not only save your life, but I will yet make you a man whom all revere and give you a fortune as well."

"Life, such as it has been to me, is hardly worth the living, so I fear not death."

"Yes, but with riches, high rank, and none knowing you as you are, as you were, life will be a dream of happiness."

"If one can forget the past," he said with a sneer.

"Bury the past and live for the future."

"Do you pledge yourself to obey me in return for the life I save, and the fortune and rank I will secure for you?"

"I do."

"Swear it."

"I swear it!"

CHAPTER II.

A WICKED WOMAN'S WAY.

TWICE did the handsome, yet evil woman, make the condemned man raise his right hand and swear before her that he would obey her commands in return for her saving his life and gaining for him wealth and rank among his fellow-men.

He had borne his sentence well, had come to regard death as a lasting sleep, a rest, a banishment of all care, and shrunk not from the gallows the law had doomed him to ascend.

Now before him came this woman, who, whether really his mother or not, had taught him evil instead of good, had encouraged him to a life of crime and then set him adrift in the cruel world to work his way from childhood to the grave.

She came to him now as his mother, or one who sought not only to save him from an ignominious death, but to bring him to wealth and riches.

She had his pledge of obedience, and then said:

"Let me ask you if you do not know whom many have claimed that you are?"

"Yes, I am said to be Captain Trevor De Villers, late of the British Army in India, but who resigned his commission and went to the United States gold fields in the Wild West country, and since then has not been heard of."

"Yes, he loved Lady May Melville of Moorlands, and she loves him; but her father was determined to marry her to the elder brother of De Villers, he who was to have gotten the title and estates, and this drove Trevor to America."

"Well, you know that I, who went wrong and committed the crime which I am under

sentence of death for, am not, as people say, Trevor De Villers, they believing that I, as Trevor De Villers, deny my identity to save the name from disgrace."

"Yes, I know that you are not Trevor De Villers, but Villers Tremain, and I do know that the old noble is dead, that the elder brother, Duncan, was thrown from his horse and killed, and that the captain who went to America is the heir to all."

"Granted."

"I do know that you are his living image, in height, bearing, face, yes even to possessing one gray eye and one blue eye, as he has, and that in the palm of your left hand, as in the palm of his, is pricked with India ink the coat-of-arms of the De Villers family."

"A striking coincidence, perhaps added to by your devilry for some motive of your own."

"You are right, and being the counterpart of Trevor De Villers, who has been three years in America and not heard from by any one in England, once freed from this death shadow, you can spend your time in learning your lesson well of the De Villers home, The Cliffs, of the family and all necessary to know, for he was three years in India remember, before going to the United States, and then you can cross the waters, visit the Wild West, seek out Trevor De Villers there, see that he never returns as heir, while you, returning after several years, can become Lord Trevor De Villers of The Cliffs."

"By the cross, woman, but for ingenious plotting in a devilish way you can surpass any one I ever met," said the man with deep feeling.

"Do you not see that my plot is wholly feasible?"

"Well, under some circumstances, yes. But, where is Captain De Villers?"

"He is gold-hunting in Arizona."

"You know this?"

"I do."

"How so?"

"I am myself an American now."

"You?"

"Oh, yes. I became converted to Mormonism, through the teachings of an elder of the church of Latter Day Saints, and going to America I married a prominent man in Utah, and my home is there."

"And what brought you to England again?"

"I read of your trial in an English paper and came here to save you."

"To carry out your plot?"

"Yes, for I felt that you could win the game if you played your cards cleverly, and in the end claim Lady May of Moorlands for your wife, and she is immensely rich, you know."

"And you have seen Captain De Villers in the United States?"

"I have, and I know where you can find him."

"What for?"

"Fool! do you not know that only through his death you can become Lord De Villers?"

"Ah, yes."

"I have just heard that his old friend, Lord St. John Mildmay, denying that you were Trevor De Villers, has gone to the United States to find him, intending to secure the services of a noted scout there, Buffalo Bill, to look him up, but it will do no good, for even the scout I refer to will not dare venture into the Grand Canyon country where Captain De Villers has gone."

"Dare I go?"

"Yes."

"I have no money."

"I will supply all you need."

"And you will set me free?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Within the next week."

And the strange woman kept her word.

CHAPTER III.

GOLDEN HAIR, THE GOLD HUNTRESS.

THE scene changes from the cell of an English prison to the far frontier of the United States, to the then unknown wilds of Arizona.

The time is several months after the escape of Villers Tremain the condemned mutineer, whose mysterious and remarkable escape startled the people of the community, and

fell heavily upon the shoulders of the keepers of the prison.

The escape had been so well planned by some one outside that no one suspected it, until the keepers found in the prisoner's cell one morning, not Villers Tremain the mutineer, but a man who had come into the prison in the garb of a priest.

In stature, in appearance not unlike the prisoner, he had gone to the cell, a razor had shaved Tremain's face clean, a pair of gold spectacles had added to the cheat, and the priestly garb had made the metamorphosis complete.

The man who remained would only say that the prisoner was his friend, and so he had aided him.

He was no priest, was unknown, and confessed himself willing to suffer the year's imprisonment for his aiding the prisoner, though there were those who asserted that some one outside had given him a large bribe, which he would enjoy upon his having served his time.

And so it was that several months after Villers Tremain's escape from prison, the scene changes to Arizona, in the new land across the sea from Old England.

Up in the canyon that penetrates into lofty red cliffs, a day's ride from the Colorado River, there still stand the ruins of a rock cabin, beneath the shelter of some trees that shelter a large spring, known to-day to the few Mormons and scouts who travel that trail as "Jacob's Pool."

Back behind the rock cabin, which was built as strong as a fort, and with a flat roof and breastwork above, stood, at the time of which I write, a tepee.

There were two rooms in the cabin, a shelter along the front serving as a piazza, and it commanded the entrance to the canyon, while, secluded as it was, it would be hard to find, and its presence there never suspected.

To one passing without on the plain, even near to the cliff, the canyon was not visible, and the stream of water from the spring flowing into a deep pool where game came to drink, was lost there.

In front of the tepee were three Indians, a brave, his squaw and their son, a lad of scarcely over fourteen, and the latter had just ridden in on his pony from a hunt down on the Colorado, with a long string of fish, an antelope and a wild goose.

The three Indians were gazing with evident pleasure upon the game the lad had brought in; when suddenly they started, and all stood in an attitude of listening.

What they heard was the sound of hoof-falls upon the hard surface of the entrance to the cabin, and quickly the three darted toward their tepee, and running to the rock cabin, ascended by a ladder made of a lariat, to the roof, and crouching down behind the rocky breastwork, peered through rifle-holes toward the point around which whoever was coming must soon appear.

They were calm in manner, yet anxious, and awaited in silence what danger might be in store for them.

Suddenly there came around the bend in the canyon four horses, two of them bearing riders, and two with heavy packs.

At once the three Indians broke their silence, each speaking a few words, their rifles were laid down and they descended from the roof and stood awaiting the arrival of those who were coming.

One of them was a man, dressed in border garb, and yet whose bronzed face was that of the prisoner last seen in the cell of an English prison.

His companion was smaller, dressed in buckskin, slouch hat and top boots, and like the other heavily armed.

Taking off the sombrero he wore, to wave it in response to a welcoming cheer from the Indians, a mass of wavering golden hair fell down his back and upon his shoulders like a veil, reaching below his belt and resting upon the back of his horse.

Turning to the escaped prisoner he said:

"Well, Villers Tremain, there you see my Wild West home, and those are my faithful allies, Indians bound to me by ties that death alone can sever."

"A strange home, a strange companionship for a woman like you, beautiful, educated, fitted to adorn a palace, yet dwelling in a cabin in a wilderness.

"You are a strange creature, *mother*, and I breathe the name in mockery only," said the man with a sneer.

"You are right."

"Drop the mother now, for here I am known only as Golden Hair the Gold Huntress, and the few whom I have met in these wilds do not even believe that I am a woman, and it is better so, for it might cost me my life for one to believe it."

"But, come, Tremain, dismount, for you are welcome to the home of Golden Hair the Gold Huntress, and from this lone spot you are to go forth to claim your own, a proud title and vast riches that go with the name of Trevor De Villers."

She sprang from her horse as she spoke and grasped with each hand that of the warrior and his squaw, and then turned to the lad and greeted him also, while she said:

"Navaho, this is my friend, my brother; let him be your brother also."

The Navaho chief stepped forward and grasped the hand of the stranger while he said in a dignified manner:

"He Navaho's brother too."

And thus was the escaped prisoner welcomed to that lone cabin retreat.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WILD WEST BORDER.

"WELL, Tremain, you see I have told you the truth," and the woman smiled triumphantly as she turned her gaze upon the man, after she had thrown open the door of her cabin.

"Yes, you have a home here; *but such a home*," answered the man, with a sneer, gazing at the stone cabin.

"Why it is all one could wish out here, a home and a fort combined, while I have three faithful friends who would die at my command."

"Fort Wingate is the nearest protection in the Southeast, to the westward there is not a settlement nearer than California, northward days of travel from here there is Salt Lake City, with a few scattering Mormon settlements between, while the way we came you know is a long trail to a habitation."

"The Zuni, Moqui, Navajo and Piute Indians inhabit this country, so you see we have little to fear as no red-skin will harm me."

"And you say that it is to this country that Captain Trevor De Villers came?"

"Yes, or rather to the country bordering the Colorado River canyon, for there it is said, untold treasure of gold ore, to be found."

"And Lord Mildmay is to come here in search of him?"

"That was the intention, but, as I said, not even Buffalo Bill will dare guide a small party into this unknown land, so it will be for us to find him, and—"

"And what?"

"See that you return to England as the heir to the title and estates of the De Villers, that you go back as Trevor De Villers himself, and that *he never returns*."

"His death alone preventing him?"

"Of course, how stupid you are."

"And how long have you dwelt here alone?"

"Since I saw, when I went with my husband to Santa Fe, Trevor De Villers there, and then knew that he was in this country."

"I incidentally learned that he was going into the Grand Canyon country in search of gold, and I set spies to watch his movements, and returning to my home, my husband being the owner of a mine near Mary's Vale, I at once made my arrangements and mysteriously left my home."

"I had prevented a massacre of these red people, who are my friends here, and so I came to them for refuge."

"They then came with me here, their tribe built my cabin, under my direction, and here I lived, determined to make capital out of Trevor De Villers when the time came to do so, for a spy had told me that he knew just where he could be found when wanted."

"One day I read, in an English paper as I told you, for that lad goes to the nearest settlement for provisions and the papers for

me, that you had led a mutiny aboard ship and was being tried for murder, with every possibility of being hanged."

"Then I saw a still better chance to gain riches, and return to England and live in luxury, and so I went there at once to play my game for you to win the prize and Trevor De Villers to lose it."

"Well, you are playing your cards well!"

"Oh yes, and will win in the end, though Lord Mildmay is to be feared, and he came here to find Trevor De Villers."

"And may do so?"

"It is possible, but not probable; but we have no time to lose, so must hunt De Villers down and put an end to his life."

"This done, we can take our time in returning to England, and there is one there whose life must also cease."

"Who is that, my fair Borgia?"

"The one whom I bribed to aid me in a work you may some day know all about, but not now, not now, for you are pledged to obey my commands until I see fit to release you; but that one must die, though I will end her career."

"It is a woman then?"

"Yes."

"One you are jealous of?"

"Bah! I never loved but one man, and know not now what jealousy is."

"But she has a tongue and can use it, so it must be silenced, or she might spoil all."

"All right, I am in the game with you, win or lose, so you direct and I obey; but you have a price in all you do?"

"Yes, and my price is half your fortune, for the title I cannot share, and regret that I cannot; but, with a large fortune I am young enough yet, yes and my beauty is not all gone, so I can catch some old titled fool and gain thus the goal of my ambition."

"Ambition has wrecked more men and women than have the storms of the seas wrecked vessels."

"True, but I was not born to be wrecked."

"My love and life were wrecked in my girlhood, and in my despair I became a Mormon's wife; but the chance to cast off the hateful yoke, through finding you, did not come to me after I had passed two-score years not to give me the chance of winning fortune and title in the end."

"Now I shall steer clear of all breakers and sail safely into port."

"But come, enter my house and see how comfortable it is."

"Up the canyon I have a corral of half a hundred horses, game abounds in plenty, and a monthly ride to the settlement secures us provisions, so what more do we need?"

"I will send Little Coyote, the Indian lad, to see my spy and have him come to me, that I may know all about Trevor De Villers, and then you take the trail for his camp and he must die by your hand only, for so it is written in my creed of revenge," and the woman spoke with sudden fierceness of manner that almost startled the man.

Throwing open the door of her cabin he saw within two large rooms, fairly well-furnished, and certainly far more comfortable than he had expected to find in that wild land.

The Indian squaw was cooking supper over against the cliff, in a natural fire-place, and the odor of frying fish, coffee and boiling antelope steak came to the nostrils of the man, giving him an appetite that would do justice to all that would be placed before him.

And yet his surroundings impressed him almost painfully, for he could not shake off the thought that he had come there to take a human life that he might gain title and wealth thereby.

CHAPTER V.

TWO FUGITIVES.

Two men were riding over the barren plain that runs from the Colorado River, back from Lee's Ferry, to what is now known as House Rock Ranch.*

The men had their weapons with them, but no more, for they rode without saddle and bridle, the stake-ropes serving as halters for their horses, and they carried no blankets or haversack of provisions.

* The ranch of J. W. Young, a son of Brigham Young. —THE AUTHOR.

One was a man of medium height, with the darkly bronzed face and jetty hair of a Mexican.

It was a handsome face, though sinister, and a smile that seemed constant revealed milk white teeth that gave him an expression in which there was a dangerous look, and to which the gleam of his dark eyes added.

He was dressed in the picturesque garb of Mexico and rode with the ease natural to his people.

His companion was a man six-feet in height, broad-shouldered, erect, and wore his blond hair long, while his mustache of the same hue, fell to his shoulders.

He was dressed like a Texas cowboy, and his handsome face was daring, reckless and cruel.

There was a haggard look upon the faces of the two men, and they gazed at the long line of red cliffs on their right as though longing for some resting place.

But not a tree, or blade of grass was visible, there was no sign of water within reach of their vision, and no game had come within reach of their rifles through the whole day's ride.

Keeping close in under the red cliffs, towering hundreds of feet above their heads, they suddenly, as one man, came to a halt.

Their eyes were riveted upon the ground, where they beheld a fresh and well-defined trail of four horses.

The trail came from the direction in which they were going, and turned short off to the left, going straight toward the cliffs a few hundred yards distant.

"Pard Kit, there is a trail here that must lead to some white man's camp, though I see no canyon," said the Mexican, speaking with only the slightest foreign accent.

"Yes, it is not an Indian trail, Don, for the horses were shod," answered the Texan whom his companion had called Kit.

"Well, shall we follow it?"

"I say yes, for I am half starved, and if they are white men we can tell a story of an escape from the red-skins, while if they are Indians, riding American horses, we are all right when we tell them we belong to the Gold-Hunters' band, should they not recognize us?"

"Very well; we must follow the trail, for we cannot stand starvation much longer and it is a long trail to a settlement."

So saying the two horsemen turned into the trail and, as they came close up to the cliffs they saw that a canyon was visible before them, its entrance going obliquely back into the range, so it was not noticeable a short distance off.

Into this canyon ran the fresh trail, and the keen eyes of the two men saw that there was the trace of other and older trails going in the same direction.

"It looks as though there may be a lay-out up this canyon, Don Joe," said the Texan.

"Yes, we must go slow," was the answer, and the two rode forward most cautiously, for their horses pricked up their ears now as though their instinct told them that there was water and food near.

After a ride of a quarter of a mile the narrow canyon turned and widened, but the two halted before making the turn and the Mexican dismounting, peeped around the rocky bend.

"All right, Kit; we will find food at the end of this trail," he said, in a cheery tone, and leaping to the back of his horse once more he rode forward, the Texan closely following.

Suddenly upon their vision burst a scene they had hardly expected to find there, for what they beheld was a rock cabin and Indian tepee, several hundred yards further up the canyon, with timber and a stream of water flowing into a pool not far from them.

Under other circumstances, half-famished with thirst as their horses were, and themselves, too, they would have sought the pool to quench it; but now they pushed on straight for the cabin which had so unexpectedly burst upon their vision.

"Who can it be that has settled here?" asked the Texan, and he added, quickly:

"See, there are a couple of Indian tepees up in the timber?"

"Yes, and I think I know who it is that dwells here?"

"You do, Joe?"

"Yes, for if I am not mistaken it is the one whom I told you I hoped to find."

"The woman you call Golden Hair?"

"Yes, for I know that she has a home somewhere here, and the Indian whom she always sent to me said that she dwelt beyond the Colorado, and had a tepee built of rocks."

"Then this must be her home!"

"Yes, and if so, we will be welcome, and if I am not mistaken there is money in it for us, for she will not wish that Englishman Captain De Villers to escape from this country, as he is the man she set me to spy upon, and though I believed him dead, as we all did, you know, I have been leading her to think that he was still alive and engaged in gold-mining, for by telling this story my pay from her was kept up, while with De Villers dead, it would have stopped."

"You are a smart one, Joe; but I hope it is the woman, for I am almost starved."

"Ah! there is an Indian watching us now."

At the corner of the rock cabin stood the tall form of an Indian, wearing the feather head-dress of a chief, and he held in his hand a rifle.

As they looked there came around the other corner of the cabin an Indian boy, while, a moment after, having evidently been given a warning of the approach of the horsemen, there appeared in the door the form of Golden Hair, the Gold Huntress.

"See! it is the woman, for she dresses in male attire," cried the Mexican, and he rode more rapidly forward now, the Texan closely following.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RECOGNITION.

At the signal of the Navaho chief that danger threatened, for any one approaching the lone cabin was looked upon as a foe, the woman stepped quickly to the door, her rifle in hand, while she said to her companion:

"That signal of the Navaho means danger."

"We are in a land where constant peril hovers about, so be prepared to fight for your life."

The man made no reply, but taking his rifle, came also to the door.

In the life that he had led since a boy of ten, he had had a strange career, constantly threatened with danger, often having to live where he was compelled to carry his rifle in his hand, and defend it at an instant's notice.

He was brave at heart, daring, cool, and possessed an iron nerve, and though he had followed the woman's will, he felt that he was the leader.

She had rescued him from prison, had aided him to escape from England, and furnishing all the money for their expenses, had led him to New York, thence to Omaha, and from there had really become his guide, taking the stage line as far as it penetrated southwestward, and after that buying horses to ride, and carrying their camp outfit on pack-animals, had led him to her lone cabin.

But now that they had reached the wilds of the West, the man began to feel that it was for him to act a part, for, to carry out the woman's will, there was work for him to do, and he must become the leading spirit.

So he stepped to the door ready to fight to the death if need be, and his eyes fell upon the two horsemen.

The woman had gazed intently at them as they approached, and suddenly cried:

"We have nothing to fear from them, for one of them is my spy, Mexican Joe, though I did hear in Santa Fe that he had once held a high rank in the army of Mexico."

Then raising her voice she called out:

"Ho, Mexican Joe, are you seeking Golden Hair, and who guided you to my cabin?"

"I was seeking you, senora, and—"

"Bah! don't senora me, for I am plain Golden Hair, to all alike; but I did not know that you were aware of where I lived."

"I was not, only I heard from your Indian messenger that you lived over here among the Pink Cliffs, and I set out to find you with my comrade here, who has aided me

through all in keeping watch upon the one you wished to shadow."

The Texan bowed, removing his sombrero courteously, as though he took Mexican Joe's remarks for an introduction.

"I am glad to meet you, sir, and to know that I have another good ally, for I will have need of the services of Mexican Joe and yourself as well."

"Now, Mexican Joe, you have news for me, or you would not have sought me, and your appearance indicates that you have ridden far and hard."

"We have, Golden Hair, and it is a long story I have to tell, so let me first say to you that both ourselves and our horses are half starved."

"Ah! you do look haggard, and fortunately dinner is about ready, so prepare for it. Little Coyote will care for your horses."

The chief had retired to aid his squaw, when he recognized Mexican Joe as the one to whom he had carried letters from Golden Hair, and Little Coyote came forward and took the two tired horses, while, turning to her companion the woman said:

"This gentleman is my friend and ally, one who has come to the Colorado country to seek a fortune, and find it he surely will, so that in serving him you will serve me, both of you."

"Now we will go to dinner, and afterward I will hear all that you have to tell, Mexican Joe, and something tells me that it is of importance."

"Of the greatest importance," said the Mexican, who with Texas Kit followed the woman and Tremain over to the cliffs where there was a table set for dinner.

The two men set to work with a ravenousness that showed how hungry they were, and for awhile little was said, as both the woman and Tremain realized that they had indeed suffered greatly for food and drink.

Having finished their meal, they were each given a pipe by Tremain, a kindness they both seemed greatly to appreciate, almost as much as they did the very tempting repast that Sun Eyes, the pretty Indian Squaw had placed before them.

The pipe seemed to calm their nerves, and after smoking in silence for awhile Mexican Joe said to his companion:

"Well, Kit, we took the right trail after our escape from the soldiers."

"I should say so, and good luck sent us this way; but who is this Golden Hair, Joe?"

"I can tell you no more than that I first met her in Santa Fe, when she engaged me for a work I have drawn pay for, though the one I was to shadow I thought was dead, as he was supposed to have committed suicide three years ago by jumping from the Cliff Cavern."

"Ah! you refer to Captain Champagne, as we called him?"

"Yes, but whose name was Captain Trevor De Villers."

"I pretended he was missing, and that I could find him when wanted, and you just heard me tell her you had helped me shadow him, so now you are posted—but here she comes to hear my story," and Golden Hair and Tremain approached together.

CHAPTER VII.

MEXICAN JOE'S STORY.

"I HAVE come to hear your story, Mexican Joe, and I wish my pard here to also listen to it, for it will interest us both," and so saying Golden Hair took a seat where she could face the two men, while Tremain threw himself down upon a blanket lying under a pine.

"I will tell you all, and it is a good deal to tell, Golden Hair, taking from the time you employed me to shadow Captain Champagne, but whom you know as Captain Trevor De Villers, an Englishman."

"Yes, but speak of him as you know him in telling your story."

"I will."

"Well, he left the settlement in New Mexico, with a party coming to hunt gold in the Grand Canyon country of the Colorado River; but he got into bad company, as a trap was laid to make him a prisoner, he being reported as very rich and an English nobleman."

"His men were the plotters for they belonged to a band of outlaws known as the Colorado River Gold-Hunters, and who, in searching for the yellow metal, did all in their power to keep others out, and those who did venture were put to death, for the band was in league with the Indians, so were safe."

"You knowing all this must have been one of the outlaw band?" said the woman, and the cool response was:

"Had I not been I could never have acted as spy upon your Englishman."

"You are frank at least."

"We had a good thing of it, we believed, in hunting for gold, so were anxious to keep all others out, and when we could not do it by frightening them we took sterner measures."

"Such as killing."

"The Indians did the killing, you know."

"I understand; but now to the man in question."

"He being considered able to pay a large ransom was made a prisoner and concealed in the retreat of the outlaws, where there was a large cavern in the cliff, fifty feet from the top, and hundreds of feet to the river below."

"He was considered safe here, but he managed to escape, and it seems, befriended by the Mormon ferryman on the Colorado he was cared for and went to mining, and so I had to look up his place of refuge, and keep it hidden from all save Texas Kit here, or the band would have recaptured him."

"But I did this to serve you," and the man told the falsehood without a change of expression, though he well knew that he, and all his outlaw comrades, had believed that De Villers had sprung from the cliff and committed suicide, while in reality he had taken the trail of revenge against those who had so cruelly treated him."

"You shall not regret serving me well, nor shall your comrade; but where is Captain De Villers now?"

"You are English, I believe?"

"I was, but I am an American now."

"Your friend there is also English?"

"He too is an American now."

"But you both know something of the nobility of England?"

"Well, yes."

"Then this Captain De Villers is the heir to a title and fortune, I suppose?"

"Indirectly," and the woman's face flushed.

"And if he should be found when wanted, he would get his rights?"

"Yes, about that."

"And if he should die then there is another heir to claim the title and estates?"

"Of course that goes without asking."

"Kit?"

"Well, Joe."

"Did you ever see a more perfect image of Captain De Villers than is that gentleman, Mr. Tremain?"

"I never did," was the answer.

"In face, form and bearing, yes, even their voices are similar," said Texas Kit, and at the question and answer the woman's face became livid, while the Englishman also paled and looked nervous.

Seeing that she had to present a bold front, Golden Hair said quietly:

"You have hit it, for the two are kinsfolk, and should Captain De Villers not secure the title and fortune this gentleman will."

"It will take skillful plotting for either to do so, and the one who pays the most wins the prize, and Tremain here will pay the largest sum, for the other refuses to give money to get what he deems rightfully his own."

"Now you understand the situation, for your cunning brain has penetrated the secret and you and Texas Kit can aid Tremain to win, for it will be largely to your interest to do so."

"I'm with you, pard," said Texas Kit.

"And you know that I am; but there is work ahead of us, and it must be done quickly and well to win."

"Is De Villers about to leave the country?" asked the woman excitedly.

"That is just what he is going to do, and if he ever gets out of the Wild West there will be an end to our friend here ever getting what he seeks to obtain."

"Then tell us quickly what has been done, where De Villers is, and let us decide just what way we can win the game, be the means what they may," said the woman with stern determination in her voice.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUFFALO BILL'S SUCCESSFUL TRAIL.

AFTER a moment of thought, as though he was deciding just how to begin his story, Mexican Joe said:

"You said that you knew something about the English nobility?"

"Yes."

"Do you know of Lord St. John Mildmay?"

"Yes, I have heard of him as a young officer who has served with great gallantry in both India and Africa, and is now colonel of a crack regiment of British Lancers."

"In what way is he connected with Captain De Villers?"

"There is no other connection than that of friendship."

"I see that you are posted, Golden Hair."

"What has Lord Mildmay to do with your story?" the woman asked somewhat anxiously.

"Much, as you will presently discover; but how let me ask you if you have heard of Buffalo Bill?"

"Who has not?"

"What have you heard of him?"

"I have heard that he was a noted scout, guide and Indian-fighter."

"He is all that, yes, and more too, for he can follow the trail of a bird, I verily believe."

"Has Buffalo Bill anything to do with your story?"

"Everything."

"In what way?"

"In a word, he led Mildmay into this unknown land and found De Villers."

Again the woman paled, while Tremain looked very uneasy at what he heard.

"Come, Mexican Joe, tell me what you know, for I dislike suspense," said the woman sternly.

"I will do so, and as quickly as I can."

"Whatever Lord St. John Mildmay may be to this Captain De Villers, he certainly came to the United States to look him up."

"He came with strong letters that caused General Miles to order Buffalo Bill, the chief of scouts of the Military Department, to come as his guide into this country, or rather to agree to meet him at a given point."

"I was on a spying duty in New Mexico, with Kit here as my comrade, and Lord Mildmay engaged us as two of his party, our old scout by the name of Haphazard Harry being the leader and guide until we should meet Buffalo Bill."

"Well, it was the same old story, for the Indians, as you know, led by our band of Gold-Hunters, attacked the party, killed off all but Lord Mildmay and Old Harry, for Kit and I were of course in no danger, and they were taken to the retreat and put into the cavern prison, the Englishman being wounded several times, though not seriously."

"Buffalo Bill, however, had not come alone to join us at the place specified, but had eight of his scouts with him, and a young lieutenant, Ames, and some soldiers as an escort for the Englishman."

"What followed was just what might have been expected when Buffalo Bill was the leading spirit, seconded by such a gallant officer as Lieutenant Ames."

"They sent for reinforcements to Wingate, and pushed on right into the wildest part of the country where our retreat lay, whipping severely and capturing a band of Indians under the head chief, Flying Fox, who was our strongest ally."

"Meeting unexpectedly with Captain De Villers, who had learned the country well, they marched by night upon our stronghold and captured it, killing two thirds of one band and capturing all the others except Kit and I."

"When we saw that fighting was a hopeless game, we ran for a hiding-place we knew of, right in the midst of our retreat, and there concealed ourselves."

* Capt. R. F. Ames, a commandant of the Columbian Guards at the World's Fair.—THE AUTHOR.

"It was a sad sight for us to see our comrades killed and captured, hundreds of fine horses taken by the Buffalo Bill party, and our prisoner, Lord Mildmay, from whom we expected to get big ransom, rescued, while all our booty went also."

"But that was not all, for they made our retreat their camp, while the reinforcements having come up were led by Buffalo Bill and Captain De Villers to attack the villages of Chief Flying Fox and wipe them out."

"From our hiding-place we heard all, and at last determined to escape, for I was anxious to find you and tell you all that happened."

"And you did escape?" asked Golden Hair, deeply interested in all she had heard.

"Yes, we slipped out of our hiding-place at midnight, and taking a secret, but perilous trail known to both of us, got out of the stronghold, cut two horses out of the corral, and made our escape, without saddle, bridle, blankets or food, having only our weapons."

"I led the way, and we hoped to find you, and how glad we are to have done so, you may well understand."

"You have done so; but what of Lord Mildmay and his rescued friend, De Villers?"

"We heard them plan to go back to England together, as soon as they could get there, of course having to go back on the trail leading to Wingate."

"Mexican Joe, there is no time to be lost, for those two men, De Villers at any rate, must never return to England," said the woman with almost fierce earnestness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLOT.

THE woman was more moved than she cared to show to Mexican Joe at what she had heard, and she glanced uneasily at Tremain, as though to see how he regarded the situation.

He was unmoved, apparently, though his face was pale and stern.

The woman seemed to behold the fortune she had hoped to possess fading from her grasp, the revenge she had sought against Lord De Villers, though then in his grave, and the one he had wedded, about to prove impossible to attain, for the man she had found in the wilds of America, whom she had watched so untiringly, had certainly been rescued by his friend, Lord Mildmay, led by Buffalo Bill.

Should he escape to England, he would at once be acknowledged as Lord De Villers, receiving his title and estates, and her plot and plans would all go for naught.

"No, no, he must not go back to England, but find his grave here."

"He must be parted from Mildmay, and what his fate shall be, no one shall know, and even Buffalo Bill cannot find his grave."

"Then, in time, Villers Tremain must turn up as Trevor De Villers, tell a story of hardships and sufferings that nearly unseated his reason, and going to England, can make known how he had been captured by road-agents and held for ransom which he could not pay, until at last he escaped."

"Yes, such is my plot and it shall be carried out in full; but just how we must now decide."

So had the wicked woman mused while she paced to and fro, the others silently regarding her as the leading spirit in the matter.

At last she turned and faced both Mexican Joe and Texas Kit.

"Pards, listen to me," she said, and there was no sign of excitement about her as she spoke.

They looked at her as though expecting to hear a way out of the difficulty, for there was that about the woman that inspired confidence.

"I address myself to both of you," she went on to say slowly and distinctly.

"Because no one is leader here except myself."

"I will tell you the situation, and you can decide just what you will do."

"It is just this, that if Captain De Villers returns to England our friend Tremain here will never get a dollar, for his kinsman will

go back, marry, and his children come in ahead of this gentleman.

"If he is kidnapped, and prevented from returning, then Tremain, after awhile, resembling as he does the captain, can go to England, and knowing the situation there, palm himself off as Trevor De Villers, thus getting the fortune and title.

"He will be satisfied with the title and estates, and so will divide the large sum in the Bank of London with me.

"That sum I will split in three parts, dividing with you."

"What is the amount?" asked the Mexican quietly.

"You know, Tremain," and the woman turned to the Englishman who said:

"It was fifteen thousand pounds, and there will be four years interest due on it."

"That means seventy-five thousand dollars, men, twenty-five thousand for each of us, which will be a snug little fortune."

"When we get it."

"I have told you just how matters stand, so that you can see how sure it is; but that you may see that I am willing to be square with you, as I have some gold of my own, I will engage both of you at a salary of one hundred dollars a month, and pay all of your expenses, until we carry out our scheme to a successful termination, and then you can go with Tremain to England, pretending to be his rescuers, and there receive from him your share of the money I spoke of."

"Do you make this pledge too, Pard Tremain?" asked Texas Kit.

"I do."

"Then you and Golden Hair give each of us a paper stating what you will do, and we will bury the document, so if we are captured it will not be found upon us, but hold it as proof of your good faith."

"Yes, do as Mexican Joe says and we are in the game with you to win or lose," added Texas Kit.

"I am willing, and we will draw the papers up when we go into the cabin; but now how can we get possession of De Villers?"

"There is but one way, that I can see."

"How is that, Mexican Joe?"

Kit here can disguise himself, and go with the two Englishmen in the stage coach, after Buffalo Bill has left there, and Pard Tremain here and I can go ahead on the trail and wait for their coming."

"All right, we can hold up the coach, for remember, I am in this game to win or lose also, and I accompany you and Tremain, Mexican Joe, or, now I think of it, I will be the one to go as a passenger on the coach, for they have never seen me and I can play road agent as well as any of you.

"Yes, we will start to-night and strike for the point where they take the coach, and then agree upon the holding up place and make no mistake, for all depends upon our success."

"There will be relays of horses needed, for we shall have to ride hard for it, after we have bagged our game."

"Yes, I'll take the Navaho, his boy and squaw along, with extra horses, for I can send a couple of Indians here to keep the place until our return, as we will camp to-morrow night in a red-skin village.

"The three Indians can have relays of horses for us fifty miles apart, and that will break down the animals pursuing us."

"And Lord Mildmay, what will we do with him?" asked Mexican Joe.

"Hold him for ransom," suggested Texas Kit.

"No, we must cover up our tracks so as never to be tracked, and Lord Mildmay, if he resists must be killed, though under no circumstances must harm befall Captain De Villers until the time I set for him to die."

CHAPTER X.

THE VICTIMS.

NEARING the little stage coach station, not far from Albuquerque, which, at the time of which I write, was the terminus of the New Mexican stage-line, a couple of weeks after the scene in the cabin home of Golden Hair, was a party of horsemen, whose appearance indicated that they had been on a long trail.

The party consisted of a lieutenant, sergeant, corporal and sixteen troopers, five scouts and two whose appearance indicated that they were not native Americans.

Both of these were splendid specimens of manhood, tall, broad-shouldered, fine, fearless faced men, dressed in corduroy, top-boots and hunting-caps.

One of them was more darkly bronzed than the other, his form more slender and his movements quick and graceful, while he wore his blond hair and beard long, the former falling to his waist.

The horseman who rode by his side was one whose face and form are too well known to all to attempt to picture him, for he is one of the most picturesque characters in American border history, and his fame will never die, for it was Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts in the United States Army.*

He is dressed in buckskin leggings, cavalry boots, a hunting-jacket, beaded and quilted, and a large dove-colored sombrero, encircled by a silver cord.

Splendidly mounted, he is also splendidly armed, and the two scouts who ride in the rear of the first four of the party appear to regard him with affectionate admiration.

Following the two leaders come one of the two first described, while, riding by his side is a handsome young lieutenant wearing the colors of the infantry, but who commands the detachment of cavalry along as a guard of honor.

He was a well-knit form of the average height, his face is intelligent, fearless and expressive, and his uniform fits him to perfection, while, sitting his horse with ease and grace he looks every inch the soldier he is, and who has won the name of a dashing, gallant officer, young as he is.

Behind these two are the couple of scouts referred to, and then came the escort of cavalry and several pack-animals, with two more scouts bringing up the rear.

"With all thanks for your kindness, Mildmay, in lending me your togs, I have worn buckskin so long, have dressed in the free and easy border style for such a time, that I feel out of place in your latest style of English hunting-suits, and will be glad to get them off," called back the one who rode with Buffalo Bill, addressing the horseman who was accompanied by the young infantry officer, Lieutenant Ames.

"I agree with you, De Villers, that English hunting-suits look out of place on the American frontier, but you did look so beastly in your flannel shirt, and buckskin leggings, I did not wish you to appear before the ladies at the fort in such a rig, and having an extra suit I was glad to get you into them."

"It would not surprise me to see you turn into a full-fledged American after all," responded Lord St. John Mildmay.

"I could not do better if I did, after all I have seen of them, Mildmay; but we are nearing the trail-end now, where we will have to part with our good friends here, Lieutenant Ames and Buffalo Bill."

"It will be with deepest regret that I shall do so, for we owe more to them than we can ever repay; but is not that a smoke ahead?"

"Yes, it is the settlement, Lord Mildmay, where we leave you, for there you will take the stage, and we will part company, Lieutenant Ames and his men returning to Fort Wingate, and I going with my men up to scout to the northward, while you will soon be upon the sea crossing to your own country."

"We will regret the parting, Cody, much as we long to return to England, and I assure you that we will never forget what we owe to you and Ames, and our other kind American friends, and Mildmay and I will drink your very good health in many a foaming glass, I assure you."

Captain Trevor De Villers spoke with feeling, like one who realized all that he owed to those who had risked life to find him amid the wilds of Arizona.

A silence fell upon the party for awhile, broken only when they came to a hill from which, in the distance, a number of adobe houses were visible, denoting a Mexican village.

Soon donkeys were seen grazing about,

* Now known as Genl. W. F. Cody of the Nebraska National Guard, and a man who is the ideal of the United States Army, and popular with all who know him, a man of noble nature, unspoiled by the honors he has received the world over.—THE AUTHOR.

then sheep and cattle, and after a ride of several miles further they rode into the little town, the swarthy inhabitants gazing at them in silent wonder.

The public house of the place being known well enough by Buffalo Bill to be avoided, they held on to a motte of timber on the banks of a stream beyond the town, and there went into camp, for Colonel Baldwin, the commandant of the military post from which they had started, had equipped them well for their journey.

Hardly had they encamped when a horseman was seen approaching at an easy gallop.

He sat his horse most gracefully, and as he drew nearer it was seen that his equipments, of the Mexican pattern, were of the finest, the saddle and bridle being silver-mounted and worth a fortune for a poor man, while his weapons were also of the best make.

He was dressed in a gorgeous Mexican suit, silk shirt and all, and his sombrero was encircled by a band of five-dollar gold-pieces, and fringed around the brim with gold dollars.

Embroidered in the front of his hat was a silver snake, with diamond eyes and red forked tongue.

The horseman was smooth-faced, and at a first glance looked like a boy, but a close inspection showed that he was no youth, though his features were perfect, his eyes most expressive and he was certainly very handsome, in fact he seemed to fascinate one who gazed upon him.

Adown his back, until it rested upon the saddle-housing, was a wealth of waving, golden hair, and this but added to his striking make-up and appearance.

Raising his sombrero in a courtly manner, he said in a low, rich voice:

"I would like to see the officer in command, if you please, for I have some important news for him."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WARNING.

THE horseman had every eye upon him, yet seemed not to be in the least disturbed thereby.

His clean-cut face was unmoved, and his eyes glanced from one to another of the party, the soldiers, scouts, the Englishmen, and ended by resting upon Buffalo Bill who said:

"Here comes our commander now, Lieutenant Ames."

The young officer just then approached from where he had thrown himself down under a tree on his blanket to rest, and the scout continued:

"Lieutenant Ames, this gentleman would like to speak to you, sir."

"Well, my man, what can I do for you?" asked the lieutenant.

The horseman smiled and replied:

"Just now, sir, it is something that I wish to do for you."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if it is not private, let me know what you can do for me."

"I take it, sir, that you have come here to catch the East-bound coach to-morrow?"

"Two of my friends have."

"Are you aware, sir, that the last coach to go out was held up, two passengers killed and considerable money taken?"

"No, I had not heard that; but then we just arrived here half an hour ago."

"Where was this?"

"On the Rio Puerco, sir, three days ago."

"Do you hear this, Buffalo Bill?" asked Lieutenant Ames, turning to the scout.

"Yes, sir."

"Is that Buffalo Bill the scout, sir?" asked the stranger with sudden interest, gazing at the scout.

"It is Buffalo Bill, the man who always holds the Winning Hand."

"I have heard so much of him, and have been most anxious to see him," and he still kept his eyes upon the scout, until Lieutenant Ames said:

"What more do you know of this robbery?"

"I came the same trail, sir, and it was I who mounted the box and brought the coach."

in, while, but for my timely arrival the driver would have been killed though then lying unconscious from a wound."

"You did well, my man, and I would be glad to know more of you."

"I am a gambler, a rover, sir, and pick up my money in the camps when I can, and though I gamble for a living, I play a square game and trust to luck wholly, for I am a man of chance."

"You forgot to label yourself, in giving your profession," said the lieutenant with a smile.

"Ah yes, I am known as Golden Hair, the Gold Hunter, and though not my baptismal name it answers the purpose just as well."

"You are not badly named, taking your hair and profession into consideration; but tell me, please, what more you know about the holding up of the coach three days ago."

"Very little, sir, save that I came upon the outlaws at their work, and not knowing that I was alone they took to flight, before they had time to put an end to the driver, who, as I said, was unconscious from a wound in the head, and whom they were trying to revive, believing that he had a treasure somewhere concealed that they could not find."

"I drove the coach on to the station, and a party went out in search of the robbers, but that amounts to nothing with these Greasers, who really may be the road-agents themselves."

"He may not be far wrong there, Lieutenant Ames," said Buffalo Bill, and the strange horseman continued:

"Last night, sir, I overheard two Mexicans talking together, and I caught the words."

"The next coach out will carry treasure, and one man must be ready to get possession of—"

"There the words closed, and though I walked rapidly to overtake the speakers they were lost in a crowd as they turned a corner and I could not tell which ones they were."

"But, thinking that some of your party would be going East, I rode over here to give you warning that the coach might be attacked."

"And I sincerely thank you, sir, for your kindness, and will be glad to mention your services in a report to General Miles; but, will you not dismount and have supper with us?"

The invitation of Lieutenant Ames was accepted, and the one who had given the warning of danger had supper in the camp, and afterward rode over to the little town with Lieutenant Ames, who heard from the agent of the stage line the story of the road-agents holding up the coach, and that Golden Hair, the Man of Chance, had rendered valuable services in driving off the robbers and bringing the vehicle in.

The wounded driver was recovering rapidly, but as he had been the first one shot, because he would not halt when ordered to do so, he could tell nothing of what afterward happened.

Bidding Golden Hair good-night, Lieutenant Ames told him his warning would be heeded, and returned to his camp.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRAP SET FOR ROAD-AGENTS.

THE train was due to leave at noon the following day, and after Lieutenant Ames had held a talk with the agent, he invited Golden Hair to come out and breakfast with him the following morning, and returned to camp.

He found the two Englishmen listening to Buffalo Bill's anecdotes,* and enjoying them greatly, but upon his return they turned to the serious matter of discussing the situation.

They were anxious to hear the result of the lieutenant's visit to the stage-agent, and he promptly told them.

"That picturesque, golden-haired young man, for I am guessing at his age," he began, "is a puzzle to me, and I was anxious to get an indorsement of his character other than his own, so I visited the stage-agent."

* Buffalo Bill is an inimitable story-teller, and has a great fund of camp-life and other anecdotes.
—THE AUTHOR.

"And he vouched for him?" said Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, he told me that the Golden Hair brought the coach in, stopping on the way to dress the wound of the driver, and he modestly informed him, which he did not mention to us even, that he had killed one of the road-agents."

"The passengers' bodies he brought with him in the coach, but the outlaw he left for the coyotes, and the party that went out from here buried him, finding upon his body considerable that was valuable, he said."

"As to his antecedents, the agent knew nothing more than that he had been in town several days, and had shown himself a game one in gambling, and was generally popular."

"Now, on the outgoing coach to-morrow there is a large treasure to go, amounting to several boxes of gold that have been delayed here for some weeks, awaiting a safe opportunity to ship them, and orders came to send them immediately and take the chances."

"So the agent ships them, as I said, to-morrow, and is delighted at our arrival, and begs an escort for fifty miles, through the road-agents' country, while he made the suggestion that he send two coaches, one with soldiers two hours in advance of the others, with another force mounted to take the old trail that through the dangerous places runs parallel with the other, and within hearing distance of a shot, coming into the new road some forty miles from here."

"That is not a bad idea, lieutenant, but would it not be well for my scouts and myself to go in the first coach as passengers?"

"Just like you, Bill, to always wish to be in at the death, but we must share the honors, so I will go, with two of my soldiers, and you can take two of your scouts, while the sergeant can take the old trail with our horses."

"And I speak for a place on the first coach, Ames," said Lord Mildmay.

"You wish to see all there is of border life, I notice, Lord Mildmay; but the seat is yours if you wish."

"And I speak for a seat on the treasure-coach, for after all that may be the one that is attacked," said Captain De Villers.

"It is possible, Captain De Villers, though I hope not; but I suggested to the agent the sending of some of my men with it, and he said that he could not tell how many passengers there would be going, and Golden Hair asked to follow it as a mounted escort, so, with our coach ahead, and the sergeant on the other trail, I think we can consider the treasure-coach safe."

"Would it not be a good idea, Lieutenant Ames, to send the first coach to-night, to go into hiding so that we could ride out of camp ourselves, as though taking the back trail, flank around and join it, while the sergeant goes on with his men, thus leaving Captain De Villers in town to start in the second coach, for these road-agents have spies on the movements of the coaches, you may rest assured."

"It is a splendid suggestion, Buffalo Bill, and I will at once write a note in to the agent requesting that it be done, and we can break camp after breakfast, bidding Captain De Villers good-by as we leave him in the village; but Golden Hair is coming out to breakfast with us, and he may have some further news, for he told me he would circle around the saloons and gambling dens to-night and pick up all that he could."

Then the lieutenant wrote the note to the agent and sent it by a scout, as he would attract less attention in the village than a soldier.

In little over an hour the scout returned to report that the coach would be started out soon after midnight, and all should be as Lieutenant Ames requested.

All then retired and the camp was soon as quiet as a graveyard.

Bright and early the camp was astir, and while breakfast was cooking up rode Golden Hair.

He saluted all politely, and said to Captain Ames that he had seen the agent, and therefore was posted as to what was to be done.

He had been up all night, he said, yet did not look in the least fagged out, and enjoyed his breakfast amazingly.

Though he had heard nothing directly,

he felt sure in circulating around the gambling-saloons, that the road-agents knew that the stage was to carry treasure and would surely hold it up on the run during the afternoon, but after that there would be little danger of an attack.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RUN OF THE EXTRA COACH.

WHEN breakfast was over the order was given by Lieutenant Ames to break camp.

The two Englishmen and Lieutenant Ames had taken quite a fancy to Golden Hair, after knowing him better, but Buffalo Bill did not seem exactly to fancy him.

"A man that is a mystery, is one to watch," the scout had said to Lieutenant Ames, who remarked in response:

"You are right, Bill, and that fellow is a mystery, and may be crooked; but his actions have spoken for him in this case, and I can only trust him, after the agent's vouching for him; but whatever break he may make, you can match him, yours will be the Winning Hand."

"He may be all right, sir, but he has got a dangerous expression about the mouth that I do not like, and I-half believe it is a woman in disguise."

"The same idea suggested itself to me, Cody; but as a woman we need expect no treachery."

"I do not look for it, sir, though women are more dangerous than men when they have a point to gain, a game to win," and the scout went on with his preparations for leaving the camp.

When all was in readiness for the march the party pulled out of camp and started for the village.

At the public house they halted and left Captain De Villers, bidding him farewell as though parting with him in earnest.

Then giving him three cheers they rode away, leaving him in the company of the stage agent.

Taking the trail they had come, the party followed it for over a mile, and then making a flank movement of several miles came around upon the stage trail, where Golden Hair guided them to the spot where the extra stage was in hiding.

It was there with its driver, and the intention was for it to pull out so as to go along the trail about on the schedule time.

The sergeant and the soldiers, with the exception of two, and under the guidance of a couple of the scouts, went along on the old trail which had been abandoned, leading the pack-animals and the other horses of those who remained to take the coach.

There were Lieutenant Ames, Lord Mildmay, Buffalo Bill, two soldiers and two scouts, who, with the driver made eight all told, and good men and true.

After the departure of the others they looked well to their weapons, and it was decided by the lieutenant that Lord Mildmay and himself, with one of his soldiers should occupy the rear seat, Buffalo Bill and one of his scouts the front one, and keep well out of sight, while the other scout and soldier should take the middle seat.

When the coach was held-up, if such was the case, they would throw open the door, leap out on each side and begin work on the road-agents, who would be taken by surprise, and hardly numbering more men would be at once overmatched.

Even if there were a dozen outlaws, the eight men they would have to meet did not care, and in fact wanted a hot brush of it.

Pony Pete the driver had insisted upon going, for his wound, a glancing one on the head, had proven not to be dangerous, and he would not hear to laying off a trip when there seemed a chance of his getting revenge for all he had suffered from time to time by the road-agents.

"This time there will be a return serenade the road-agents will not like music of, and I've got to be along to catch the tune," he had said to the agent, and so it was that he had selected the spot where he would hide and await his party, and took the coach out in the middle of the night, while his many friends believed that he was in bed suffering from his wound.

"It's about time to start now, pards," called out Pony Pete, who was a very small man but full of nerve and vim.

He wore a handkerchief bound about his head, his hat rakishly placed on one side, and, a lunch having been disposed of he mounted the box and gathered up the ribbons.

The party got in as had been decided upon, and the coach rolled away, Pony Pete looking at his watch as he turned into the trail and noting that it was about schedule time for him to have been there at that point, had he left the village as was his wont, at twelve o'clock sharp once each week on the run eastward.

The coach rolled along, the horses in an easy trot, and at last neared the spot where the road-agents had held it up on its last run.

Pony Pete had explained to Lieutenant Ames and Buffalo Bill, that he had not seen the man that ordered him to halt, and as he was on a down grade, and did not believe there were more than two or three in the party, he decided to make a rush of it.

The moment he had so decided a shot came and he fell unconscious on the top of the coach.

When he revived Golden Hair was bathing his wounded head.

The coach halted at the scene of the tragedy, and a new-made grave on one side was supposed to be that of the road-agent killed by Golden Hair.

Driving on once more the coach continued steadily on its way through the afternoon, and just at sunset rolled into the station beyond which there was little dread of road-agents holding it up, and each one of its occupants was sorely disappointed that not an outlaw had been seen on the trail.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TREASURE-COACH ON THE TRAIL.

WHEN Golden Hair rode out of the town, soon after the departure of the escort of the Englishman, he told the agent and Captain De Villers that he was going to a hiding place on the trail and await for the treasure-coach to come along.

He explained that he did not care to be seen going out with it, as it would be supposed that he went along as an escort.

"I will wait about five miles out," he said, and going to his quarters in the public house, he soon after mounted his horse and departed.

Captain De Villers found enough to interest him in a roll of papers lately reissued by the agent, and enjoyed reading them until invited to go to an early dinner at the agent's cabin, who felt honored at having a distinguished guest with him in his humble house.

When they returned the coach was ready to start, and there were three other passengers awaiting, a trio of dark-faced men who were going through to Santa Fe they said.

Trumpet Tom was to take the coach through, and he received his orders and mounted to his box, asking Captain De Villers to take a seat by his side, an invitation that was accepted with pleasure, for the Englishman liked the view as they went along, and more, did not care to ride inside with the trio who were going as his fellow-passengers.

The agent shook hands with Captain De Villers, wished him good-luck and the coach started on its trail.

Trumpet Tom had won his name from three reasons, the first being that his christian name was Tom, and the second that he had an enormous nose, which his comrades referred to as a trumpet.

There was a third reason for the nomenclature, it being his skill as a trumpeter, and the winding of his horn as he approached a station or relay no other driver could equal.

He was a plucky man and had been tried on many occasions, so hated a road-agent as he did poison.

In honor of his guest Trumpet Tom played his horn upon leaving the town, gladdening the heart of Captain De Villers with Annie Laurie, always such a favorite with the British soldiers.

Dropping the town out of sight, Trumpet Tom laid aside his horn and settled down to the serious work of driving the trail, which was not the best.

They had gone but a few miles when they beheld a horseman in the trail ahead.

Captain De Villers at once raised his glass, while Trumpet Tom remarked quietly:

"If it's road-agents, then the first coach missed them and we have got to fight for it."

"May it not be one of Buffalo Bill's party returning, or waiting for us?" quietly asked Captain De Villers, as he saw the horseman disappear before he could arrange the focus for the proper distance to see him.

"It might be, sir; but it's dollars to dimes that it is a road-agent, and as we are loaded rich I say fight."

"And I say the same, my friend; but there he is again riding into the trail."

As Captain De Villers spoke he again raised his glass, the focus being adjusted now, and at once exclaimed:

"It is not a road-agent, but that mysterious man Golden Hair, who, I had forgotten, promised to meet us upon the trail."

"You mean that fellow who may be twenty, maybe forty, with a face and hair like a woman, a voice like a flute, feet and hands as small as a child's and plays cards for a living?" asked Trumpet Tom.

"You have described him exactly. Trumpet Tom, for he is just the one I mean."

"Did not the agent tell you he was to meet us on the trail?"

"He didn't."

"Guess he forgot it; but, cap'n, I don't half like that fellow."

"Why not?"

"He's too soft for a man, too all-fired good-looking, yet he's too manly for a woman, and I like either one thing or another."

"Do you think there is any harm in him, Trumpet Tom?"

"If there is then look out, for he'll be as bad as a man and woman both."

"He may be an angel with wings, but I'll bet dollars to dimes that he has the cloven hoofs with them, for that man can both cry and smile, damn and praise the Lord all at the same time."

"The devil has warned me to fear him, but if I wrong him may the Lord forgive me," and Trumpet Tom drove on at a little more lively pace, while Captain De Villers could not but laugh at his striking description of Golden Hair the Man of Chance, or Gold Hunter, for he had spoken of himself as being both.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRAP OF THE ROAD-AGENTS.

THE Golden Hair was seated calmly upon his horse, awaiting the coming of the coach, and Trumpet Tom, ever fond of a joke, leant over and said to the three passengers inside:

"Say, pards, there be road-agents ahead, so you better get your guns ready, for we intend to fight."

There was an instant stir within the coach, and three heads peered out of the window and then quickly disappeared.

The men talked together in a low tone excitedly for a few minutes, and to frighten them more Trumpet Tom said:

"When they fire, you return their shots, if you are not dead men."

Then turning to Captain De Villers he continued:

"Do you know, sir, it's the cowardice of passengers half the time that causes the coaches to be robbed, for if they would resist, and they certainly could do so in most cases, the driver could escape without loss of life or gold; but here we are near that yellow-haired fellow," and a moment after Trumpet Tom drew rein.

The horseman had quietly awaited their approach, and, as they came to a halt saluted courteously, while he said:

"You are on time, Trumpet Tom, and the other coach has gone on, I hope to be held up, for those who are its passengers will wipe out any lawless band that may attack them."

"Well, pard, do you go on our trail, for I remember I heard the agent say you were going to act as an outside guard?"

"Yes, though I think there is little danger, following as you do the coach ahead," and Golden Hair dropped behind, glancing

into the coach as he did so to note what passengers were there.

Trumpet Tom then drove on, and after a ride of an hour longer came to the scene of the former robbery.

The grave of the slain road-agent was visible from the box, but there was no sign that the coach a couple of hours ahead had been halted there.

The driver had just reached the bottom of a hill that was a hard pull up to the top, when suddenly a voice rung out from the roadside in tones not to be mistaken:

"Halt that coach or take the consequences!"

Trumpet Tom knew that he could not turn his coach there where he was, and to let the team back would be to go over a twenty feet cliff, while to run his horses up the hill was impossible.

Who the one was who gave the threatening command he did not know, for he was concealed, and how many more were there it was impossible to tell.

But he was not a man to yield without knowing the odds against him, and he said quickly in a low tone to Captain De Villers:

"We'll show fight and make them show their hands."

"If they are not too many for us, we'll try lead on them."

"Come, you inside fellers, get your guns ready."

Then came a shot, without another word, and with a groan Trumpet Tom fell from the box, in his dying moment holding out the reins for Captain De Villers to grasp.

This the gallant Englishman did with one hand, while he drew his revolver with the other, and started as he heard behind him:

"Hands up, pard, or you die!"

A glance over each shoulder revealed that the speaker was leaning out of the coach, while another face and form was visible on the other side.

Each man held a revolver close to Captain De Villers, and their fingers were upon the trigger, while again came the words:

"Come! hands up, for these weapons of yours have no lead in them, for that was drawn out back in the town."

"You have no claws, so don't be a fool and show fight!"

With a start Captain De Villers recognized the last speaker to be none other than Golden Hair, who had ridden up alongside the coach.

Enraged at his treachery, he called out:

"Traitor! if my life be the forfeit, you shall die for this!"

With the words the Englishman leveled his revolver at Golden Hair and pulled trigger.

There was no report, and Golden Hair burst forth in a mocking laugh, and said:

"Your teeth were drawn back in the town, as I told you."

"Look ahead and you will see that resistance is utterly useless, so remember, and do not be a fool, Trevor De Villers."

The Englishman cast a quick glance ahead and saw that three horsemen had ridden into view in the trail, and with the supposed passengers in league with the outlaws, he had but one alternative, and said coolly:

"I'll not be a fool, so surrender!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

CAPTAIN DE VILLERS possessed a nerve of iron, and yet he had caution combined with it.

Not knowing that he was not to be killed, whether he resisted or not, he naturally supposed that his death would follow quickly any further resistance.

Life had changed for him, since he had seen Lord Mildmay and was very dear to him.

He longed to again meet the woman he had so fondly loved, to revisit the old home, the scenes of his boyhood, and again see old, familiar faces.

He had already built up air-castles of his return, and now to dash down the structure by resistance when there was no hope of escape, would be madness.

He could not but feel that he had been picked out for capture, for Golden Hair's words and actions already proved that.

That money was at the bottom of it he felt certain, and it was better to pay a ransom and escape than to sacrifice his life.

Another thought cheered him, and that was the knowledge that Buffalo Bill and Lieutenant Ames were not very far away.

If the great scout had led Lord Mildmay to seek him in an unknown country, it would not be long before he would learn of his capture and be upon his trail, so there was no reason to feel blue over it, he decided.

With the three pretended passengers against him, a trio of men in the trail ahead, and Golden Hair the prime mover, he knew that there was no escape for him.

The trap had been most cleverly set for him, and he had been caught.

He recalled how kind Golden Hair had been in putting his weapons in condition for him, and at that time had taken out the bullets, so that he was left defenseless.

These thoughts flashed before the mind of Captain De Villers like lightning, and so he uttered the words that told that he realized his position and would surrender.

"You are wise, Captain De Villers, for there is no need of throwing away your life."

"Come, men, put those irons on the captain and bring the horse here that he is to ride."

Golden Hair gave the order and it was promptly obeyed by a man coming forward with a horse already saddled and bridled.

The man was masked and was one of the three who had stood in the trail up the hill.

"Why put irons upon me, for unarmed and outnumbered I cannot escape?"

"You are too dangerous a man to trust without being ironed, Captain De Villers, for I know your record well," said Golden Hair.

"Who are you?"

"Never mind who I am, but I know you."

"That is right, Kit, put the irons upon him," and as Golden Hair spoke another masked man came up with two pairs of manacles, held together by chains two feet long.

The prisoner made no resistance and the irons were clasped upon his wrists, and upon one ankle.

He was told to mount the horse led up for him and did so, and then the other iron was clasped about the other leg.

"They will not incommode you much, Captain De Villers, for the chains are long."

"Now, Tremain, go ahead with him, and you also, Kit, for Joe will remain with me to get the treasure," ordered Golden Hair.

The three men she addressed were all securely masked, and her orders were promptly obeyed, one of those who had come in the coach going with the prisoner's party and leading half a dozen riderless horses.

The other two pretended passengers had meanwhile taken the treasure-boxes out of the coach, and were breaking them open to put the gold in half a dozen strongly-made bags that they might the more easily be handled.

These bags were put upon one of two pack-horses, the saddle having evidently been brought for that purpose.

This done the two men searched the body of the dead driver, and then stripping the coach-horses of their harness, led them along after the animals carrying the pack and the treasure.

"Catch up with those ahead, men, and tell them to push ahead with all speed to the first relay of horses," added Golden Hair as they rode off, following the trail of those that had gone with the prisoner.

When they had disappeared, Golden Hair sat in the saddle, musing deeply.

That it was the woman who had rescued Tremain from prison, and so boldly carried out her plot to capture Captain De Villers, the reader cannot but be aware.

A smile of triumph rested upon her face now, as she felt that she had won success, but it faded as her eyes fell upon the dead body of Trumpet Tom.

"There lies a good man, brave and devoted to duty."

"It was a pity to kill him, and yet the good and innocent must suffer that the evil and guilty may prosper."

"The die is cast, and no life must stand now between me and success, must thwart

my ambition, for I will yet dwell among the noble ladies of my native land that despised me as the daughter of a poor and honest farmer.

"He, the honorable Lord De Villers, made me what I am, for he destroyed my nature prone to good, and taught me how evil the world was, even among those in the highest places."

"He cast me aside and wedded a titled lady, and though he died before he felt my revenge, his descendants, his heir, shall feel it in all its mercilessness."

"The seeds are sown, and I will reap the reward of my sin all in good time, and I can wait."

"Now, Buffalo Bill, let me see if you can follow the trail of Golden Hair, the Gold Huntress," and shaking her fist up the trail, she put spurs to her horse and dashed away after her companions.

CHAPTER XVII.

BUFFALO BILL'S DISCOVERY.

THE first stage went on its way unmolested, as can be understood from the ingenious plot of the Golden Hair.

She had arrived some days ahead of the Buffalo Bill party, which had delayed at the retreat of the outlaws on the Colorado for several days after the soldiers' attack on the Indian villages, and again had remained a few days at the fort, while they had traveled slowly on the trail.

Hurrying through to head them off, Golden Hair and her party had struck the stage-trail just in time to come upon three or four road-agents holding up the coach.

They had been at once recognized by Mexican Joe and Texas Kit as secret members, and spies of the band of Colorado Gold-Hunters, and who lived back in the settlement which was the terminus of the stage-line.

They were readily induced to join with Golden Hair, one of their number being dead, slain by the driver who was supposed to be mortally wounded.

The woman at once saw her chance, to make capital for herself out of the attack on the coach, so she sent her own party into hiding back on the trail they had come, telling them to cover up their tracks well, and ordered the three road-agents into the settlement to aid her in her plot there, while she, claiming to have killed the dead outlaw, and stampeded the others, mounted the box, with her horse in lead, and drove on to the village.

Discovering on the way that the driver, Pony Pete, was returning to consciousness, she halted and dressed his wound, and upon her arrival in town became a hero for her supposed pluck in the rescue, no one suspecting her of being a woman.

To guard against suspicion she at once gave out that she was a gambler, known as Golden Hair the Man of Chance, and an expert with cards played a number of successful games the night of her arrival.

Keeping in communication with Tremain and the others, through one of the three outlaws who had attacked the coach, she awaited the arrival of Buffalo Bill and those with him, and maneuvered so cleverly that she won the game she played so desperately to win.

Having made known just how it was that the scheming woman played her cards, it will be well now to follow the coach that first started, so well prepared to capture any outlaws that attempted to hold it up.

When the station was reached, where Buffalo Bill and those with him were to stop off, they found that the sergeant and his party had arrived only a short while before them and gone into camp just before reaching the little town.

The other coach was not expected to arrive until after nightfall, and would pass within sight of their camp, so it was decided to await supper for Captain De Villers and Golden Hair, who was expected to accompany him.

Night came on, and yet there was no sound of Trumpet Tom's horn.

An hour passed, then another and all knew that the coach was overdue, yet did not appear.

Ten o'clock came and a general feeling of anxiety came over all.

Supper was then served, and Buffalo Bill said:

"The coach has doubtless broken down, so I will ride back on the trail and look it up."

"And if you are not back by dawn, Cody, I will come with my men," Lieutenant Ames rejoined.

Declining company Buffalo Bill mounted his horse and rode off in the darkness, while the others all turned in for a good night's rest, it not being considered necessary to set a guard about the camp.

Buffalo Bill went slowly along the trail, hoping each moment to come upon the missing coach.

It was bright starlight, and he could see fairly well, for the stars shine more brightly in that clear atmosphere, yet they revealed not the coming coach.

Midnight came and he had discovered nothing, though he had ridden ten miles back on the trail.

Three o'clock came and he was twenty-five miles away from the station he had left, yet had made no discovery.

At last the gray of dawn appeared in the east and he muttered:

"I cannot be over fifteen miles from the starting-point."

"Can the coach have failed to start out, I wonder?"

As he uttered the words the long-drawn-out howl of a wolf came to his ears, the sound coming from the bottom of the hill.

"That is a call to his comrades; does it mean that he has found a feast?"

"No, no, not so bad as that, I sincerely hope," and the scout spurred rapidly down the hill.

As he reached the valley he scattered several wolves that were gathered there, and coming to a sudden halt he beheld the coach, the horses gone and a human form lying upon the ground near.

"My God! they have been wiped out!" cried Buffalo Bill, throwing himself from his saddle and dropping upon his knees by the form lying so still with face turned toward the dawn of day above the hill-tops.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SURGEON SCOUT.

"It is Trumpet Tom," cried Buffalo Bill, recognizing in the early light of day the driver of the coach, whom he had met the day before.

"Dead, and for a long time, for he is clammy cold."

"The horses unharnessed and gone and no one visible."

"Had any one escaped and gone back to the village there would have been a crowd here before this."

"Yes, there are the treasure-boxes and they are broken open and empty."

"There has indeed been red work here, and necks must stretch for this deed."

"Poor Captain De Villers! What has been his fate I wonder?"

The scout arose from the side of the body and stood silent and stern for some moments.

At last he said:

"Lieutenant Ames said if I was not back by dawn he would start on my trail, so he has left by this time."

"Riding rapidly, as he doubtless will in his increased anxiety through my not returning, he will be here in five or six hours, so I will camp for breakfast, and then ride on into the village and make my report, leaving a note here for the lieutenant."

"Ho, old pard, how are you?"

The scout started as he heard the voice near him, and beheld coming toward him a horseman with a pack-animal following him.

At a glance he recognized him and shouted out in a glad voice:

"By the blue skies above, Frank Powell, there is no man on earth I would rather see at this time than you."

"Glad of it, Bill, old fellow, for I like a welcome from a friend," and the horseman rode up, threw himself from his saddle and grasped the out-stretched hand of the scout.

He was a man just under six feet, splendidly formed, erect with military bearing, and was dressed in fringed buckskin leggings, top boots and an army fatigue jacket with the shoulder-straps of a surgeon with the rank of captain upon them.

His hat was a wide-brimmed black army turban with an officer's cord around it, and a pair of small crossed sabers in front.

His trappings were military, his two horses the very best and his pack-animal carried an outfit for a long trail and comfortable camping.

The face of the man was a study, so combined in it were womanly gentleness and the perfection of manliness.

It was a stern face in repose, with an expression of sadness about the eyes; but when lighted up with a smile it was wonderfully bright and fascinating.

A fort surgeon in the army, Frank Powell,* for such was his name, was a natural plainsman, and had won fame as a scout, trapper and Indian-fighter, being known as the Surgeon Scout.

"Well, Bill, this looks like a hold-up," said Surgeon Powell, as he glanced at the deserted coach, while, his eye falling upon the dead driver he stepped toward him and added:

"Poor fellow, he is beyond need of me now."

"Yes, Frank," said Buffalo Bill, for they were the dearest of friends, and had been on many a desperate trail together.

"Old Satan has got his work in here in great shape, as you will see when I tell you the story."

"The last I heard of you, Bill, was when General Miles let you go as guide to some English lord who wanted to go into Arizona in search of some lost friend, as though any sane man would care to go into the Colorado River country."

"Well, some sane men did go and we accomplished all that we went for, though it has all been undone right here on this spot."

"You do not mean it?"

"I do, for the man we went to find was a passenger in this coach and one of the noblest men in the world."

"Well, Bill, I am glad I hunted you up, for I got into the village last night, and was told that you had taken this trail, with a number of soldiers escorting some English noblemen."

"The agent told me, and said you were to branch off from the station ahead and go to Wingate, so I determined to take an early start and head you off where the trail forks some miles beyond, as I also am bound to the fort."

"You are going to Wingate?"

"Yes, for I am on leave for sixty days, and shall circulate among the forts, rather than go East."

"You will circulate with me, Frank, for you are the very man I need most, and we'll take the trail of the man who was either killed or captured here."

"I will let you have the whole story from start to finish," and Buffalo Bill gave the story from his going with Lord Mildmay to find Captain De Villers, and what had happened while on the trail.

"And now to think, when the two were safely brought this far, that Captain De Villers should meet either death or more serious harm here, after our coach had passed along without seeing even the photograph of a road-agent."

"It is certainly a sad case, Bill, and I will pledge myself to you to see the end of the trail."

"Just what I expected from you, Frank."

"But a man cannot burn without fuel, and I did not take breakfast in the village inn, having had supper there, a supper to remember with regret for having eaten it, so I came on to camp on the trail, and we will now eat, Bill, for I have an excellent larder and complete outfit."

"There is a stream and grass for our horses, so let us go there and then decide what is best to do."

The two friends soon had their horses staked out and a fire lighted and Buffalo Bill cooked breakfast, the Surgeon Scout remarking:

"You be the chef, Bill, for I know your skill as a cook, for there are none better in serving up a camp meal."

* Doctor D. Frank Powell, now of La Crosse, Wisconsin, and whose life on the frontier has been written in song and story, and will go down in history as long as the charm of Wild West life remains to readers.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLEDGED PARDS.

THE two pards having finished breakfast, placed the body of Trumpet Tom in his coach, and then began the search for some clue to discover from whence the road-agents had come and whither gone.

They soon discovered a trail of half a score of horses that led to the top of the hill at the base of which the hold-up had occurred.

"They came from the west, and now to see if this trail from the scene joins it," said Buffalo Bill.

They followed the well-marked trail away from the spot, and half a mile away discovered that it joined the other that had led to the scene of the attack.

"Along that trail there went ten horses," said Buffalo Bill, reading the signs like a page from a book, and he continued:

"See, this trail turns into it here, and with the addition of the six coach-horses."

"You are right, Bill."

"They came from the westward, and go back on their track, so that is the way for us to go."

"It is."

"Now, Frank, I shall go at once to the village and report to the agent just what has happened, and you can await in camp the coming of Lieutenant Ames, whom you know."

"It is Robert F. Ames of the Sixth Infantry, and whom we call Tote?"

"That is the same officer, Frank."

"And a fine one he is, afraid of nothing and a good fellow as well, take him any date in the week, Bill, Sundays included."

"He is all that, Frank, and just the one we wish for the trip that we have to make, for I have seen him tried."

"Well, I'll wait for his coming and tell him where you have gone, if you do not get back before he arrives."

Ten minutes after Buffalo Bill was in his saddle pushing his horse at a swift gait for the village.

He passed the scene of the other attack on the coach at a walk, but saw no attempt had been made there on the last run, and hurrying on he reached the agent's house in just two hours and made his report.

The agent was horrified at the tidings, and collecting a posse of men, returned at once with the scout to the scene.

The splendid animal ridden by Buffalo Bill kept the horses of the score of men who accompanied him at a brisk pace, and the ride back was made also in a couple of hours.

As they drew near the spot they saw the soldiers just arriving upon the scene and beheld Lieutenant Ames and Lord Mildmay listening to the story the Surgeon Scout had to tell them.

Riding up with the agent the situation was fully discussed, and Lieutenant Ames decided that he would at once send a courier with a report of the affair to Colonel Baldwin, and state that, with Buffalo Bill as guide, and Surgeon Powell as an ally, they would at once take the trail of the outlaws and stick to it to the end.

As the three other passengers could not be found, but were missing as well as was Captain Trevor De Villers, it put a mystery upon the affair that could not be explained, and the lieutenant was in hopes that all had been captured to be held for ransom, for the bodies of none of them had been discovered, which would have been the case had the outlaws killed them.

Had they been wounded, it was argued, they would have been left behind, the outlaws not caring to be retarded in their flight by helpless men.

Lieutenant Ames, taking the estimate of Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell from the horses' tracks visible, placed the force of outlaws in his report at about ten, and added:

"I take with me only the picked men of my command, the surgeon, corporal and twelve men, sending the others to the fort by slow marches."

"Besides Buffalo Bill and his four scouts, there will be Lord Mildmay and Surgeon Frank Powell, who fortunately for us, has a sixty days' leave, and so joins us, and with myself, this will give us twenty-two men all told, ample for the work to be done, and

enough to cope with any prowling bands of Indians we may run upon.

"As we will need an extra supply of provisions, and the trail runs west, kindly send a few extra horses and supplies to meet us, Buffalo Bill says, on the Mesa La Vega, at the Pinon Springs there, for we can reach them at that point more readily than at the fort, and if we do not have to go so far, I will send a scout there to recall them."

"It is my opinion that Captain De Villers is a prisoner held for ransom, and has not been killed by the road-agents, but we will not leave the trail until the end is reached and the outlaws captured or slain, so I beg of you, colonel, to kindly detail me, and my men, for this special duty."

The courier having been dispatched with Lieutenant Ames's report, the men who were not to go on the trail were sent off on their return to the fort.

Trumpet Tom was left to the agent to bury, and return with the coach to the village, while the outlaw-hunting band started off on the trail they were to follow, camping only when night came on, and, as Surgeon Powell put it:

"Buffalo Bill's Pledged Pards to rescue or avenge the outlaws' deed."

CHAPTER XX.

AT FAULT.

THE chief of scouts set the example of retiring early, when they went into camp, as he was considerably fatigued with his night and two days' hard work and having no sleep or rest since he had left the village the morning before.

The trail had been followed for some ten miles from the scene of the tragedy, and calculating the time of the attack upon the coach the afternoon before, Buffalo Bill decided that the outlaws had all of twenty-four hours' start of their pursuers, but whether they had traveled all night or not was the question they would have to find out from the camps they came upon.

Whether the outlaws had known of the presence of the soldier in that part of the country was also an unanswered question, for if they did the chances were that they would push their flight hard, knowing that a pursuit by Buffalo Bill meant far more than to be pursued by any force the stage-agent might send after them.

Of course the affair was discussed in its details, before retiring, and the question was asked:

"What became of Golden Hair the Man of Chance, or had he joined the coach before it was attacked?"

Buffalo Bill responded, by saying that he had noticed where a single horseman had gone into the stage trail, kept it for some time and halted, and the same tracks had then followed on after the coach; it was presumed to have been Golden Hair, as he was known to have intended joining the stage on its way some miles out from the village.

"But the fate of Golden Hair must have been the same as the others," said Lord Mildmay, "as, if he had taken alarm at the attack he could have escaped and ridden back to the village, and if not would have either been killed or made a prisoner by the outlaws."

"That is so, Lord Mildmay, and I will look on the trail to-morrow and see if I can pick out the tracks of the horse that made the tracks following the coach."

"But how can you possibly know them, Cody?" asked Lord Mildmay.

"I observed a peculiarity in the tracks, sir, as they were long and narrow hoofs, and newly shod."

"You are a remarkable man, Cody, and I am continually learning something new of this country and its wonderful people, and if you rescue poor De Villers, I will take off my hat to every American I meet hereafter," said St. John Mildmay earnestly, and, greatly distressed at the unknown fate of his friend he sought his blankets, Buffalo Bill having risen to set the example.

When the sun arose it found the party in the saddle and on the trail.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell were side by side in advance, and their eyes were scanning every foot of the trail as they went along.

Behind them came Lieutenant Ames with Lord Mildmay riding by his side, and following were the troopers, then the pack-animals and the four scouts brought up the rear, also watching the trail and country closely.

The march was kept up for ten miles, when a halt was made for breakfast and rest, and thus an hour passed away, when they resumed their saddles again, having ridden twenty-five miles upon the trail.

Buffalo Bill had discovered that the narrow-hoofed horse, whose trail he had noticed, and supposed to have been ridden by Golden Hair, was along with the party, and the rider must also be there, it was argued, but whether as a prisoner, or dead, no one could tell.

The trail, the scout reported, had also been made by horses kept at a brisk trot, so that the outlaws were not delaying on the way.

Not a sign of a camp, though several short halts were observed, could be found, and this showed that the pursued fully understood that there was danger in tarrying there.

Not until the noon halt did Buffalo Bill discover a camp, and he called back:

"Here was their night camp, Lieutenant Ames, and it is over fifty miles from their starting-point."

The camp was in some thick pine timber on the banks of a small swiftly-running stream with a rock and gravel bed.

There was excellent grass in the timber, so a halt was made for dinner, and the horses were staked out and the men began to get dinner, but apart from the outlaws' camp, for the scouts wished to study the trail well.

"They were joined by fresh horses here, and that means several extra men of course."

"Yes, there were a dozen fresh horses here, and they remained here for some days, I notice."

"Mounting their animals they drove their tired ones along with them, so it shows this was a premeditated attack and escape prepared for."

"Whether they remained here all night, or camped only for a few hours, I cannot tell; but if the former, then they are from day-dawn to noon ahead of us, and if the latter then they are not so far."

So explained Buffalo Bill to the others his reading of the signs about the camp, and it became an assured thing that the outlaws, with their relay of horses, had come prepared to make no failure of their work, and take no chances of not being able to make their escape.

Having finished their dinner Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell followed the trail on foot to the stream where it crossed.

"But it does not cross, Bill," said Surgeon Powell.

"You are right, for there is the old trail of that relay of horses coming this way, but though the trail enters here, it does not come out upon the other side."

"No, they either went up or down the stream, and so we must camp here until we discover which," and the two returned to have a talk with Lieutenant Ames and Lord Mildmay, confessing that they were at fault and in a quandary as to which way the outlaws had gone from the crossing of the stream.

CHAPTER XXI.

BREAKING A TRAIL.

THE outlaws in their retreat, led by Golden Hair, had pushed on at a brisk trot, for the woman intended to take no chances by delay.

Mexican Joe wearing a mask, for he knew that Captain De Villers would recognize his face and that of Texas Tip, rode in advance as guide, while Golden Hair, with Tremain by her side, followed.

Tremain also wore a mask, for he cared not for Captain De Villers to see his face until he chose that he should do so.

Then came the prisoner, with one of the three new men from the little village guarding him, and the other two were in charge of the pack-horses and extra animals.

Some distance in the rear rode Texas Tip, his mask hanging to a button on his coat, for, not being visible to Captain De Villers he had taken it off.

The horses being fresh, Golden Hair allow-

ed only short halts several times and did not stop to camp until they reached the stream where the first relay of horses were waiting with the Navaho chief in charge.

It was a couple of hours after nightfall, but supper was cooked, the horses staked out, and then all laid down to rest for a few hours, the Indian standing guard.

He awoke them half an hour before daylight, and mounting the fresh animals and driving the others they rode down to the stream.

"You have arranged to break the trail, chief?" asked Golden Hair.

"The Navaho has done as the Golden Hair told him," was the answer.

"You lead the way then."

The chief rode at once into the stream, turned down it, all following, the unriden horses being now tied in single file.

He followed down the stream until day broke and then came to where the banks were rocky, steep and some six feet above the water.

There he halted along side of a large flat rock, stood up in his saddle and drew himself up to a footing, holding up a bundle of ropes he had picked up there.

Over the edge of the rocks was spread a heavy blanket then, and the ropes were handed down to Mexican Joe.

They proved to be a perfect harness for a horse, one that could be put upon him so that he could be raised bodily out of the water, upon the rock.

The packs were first taken up, then all the saddles, and the prisoner and Golden Hair taken up.

Texas Kit next harnessed one of the horses, and all the men, except the prisoner, seven in number, took hold and dragged a horse up to the rocks.

Back from the flat rock the soil was hard and stony, but blankets, folded over to be half the size in width, were laid in a row for several hundred feet, space only being left in places where a hoof would leave no mark.

As fast as a horse was drawn up, Golden Hair, she having bound the manacled prisoner to a tree, led the animal back over the blankets, halting only when she came to a trackless spot.

It was hard pulling, and took time, but the outlaws stuck to their work until every horse had been taken from the stream, at a point no one would have believed it possible for them to go, and they were all in the trackless spot referred to.

The Indian had done his work well, for he had found a place where, for several miles from the stream, no track would be visible, such was the nature of the soil.

"You have done well, chief, for I did not believe it possible to so thoroughly cover up our tracks," said Golden Hair.

The halt, and wade in the stream, seemed to have refreshed the horses, and they went on when the start was made without any urging.

Anxious to press forward with all haste, in spite of having broken the trail, Mexican Joe urged that another halt should not be made until they came to the second relay of horses, which would be about nightfall.

"I do not think there is much need now for haste, Joe, as the Navaho has so well broken the trail that no one can follow us."

"You forget, Golden Hair, that there will be one on our path who is as sure as a bloodhound upon a trail."

"Who is that?"

"Buffalo Bill, and he has got his best scouts with him, as both Kit and I knew when you told us their names."

"The Navaho has outwitted Buffalo Bill this time, for he will never be able to pick up our trail," said Golden Hair, firmly.

Mexican Joe shook his head and replied:

"If the Navaho thought of the clever scheme, Buffalo Bill can also think that he may have done just that thing, and I know that neither Indian, road-agent or any one else can throw Buffalo Bill off a trail, no matter how long they may delay him to hunt it out."

"You think then that he will be able to track us to where we are going?"

"I think that we have got to devise some plan to put him wholly at fault as to where we are seeking a refuge, so when we reach the last relay we will study out a plan to throw even Buffalo Bill off the scent."

"If we can," quietly added Texas Kit, who had been a silent listener to what had been said.

CHAPTER XXII.

TO OUTWIT THE TRAILERS.

THE second relay of fresh horses was found at a point some forty miles from where the Navaho chief had been in waiting for the Golden Hair and her party.

The Indian lad, Little Coyote, was in charge of these, and there were enough to mount the party.

The pace kept up, for Mexican Joe would push on, with the heat and going through a waterless country, almost completely used up the horses that the outlaws had begun their retreat upon, and even the fresher animals felt it too, so that when the halt was made at night the two friends, the Mexican and the Texan, put their heads together and decided to have a talk with Tremain and seek his influence with Golden Hair to decide upon some course then and there to throw their pursuers off their track, for they were sure that Buffalo Bill would be certain to follow them into the Colorado River country.

The three men having come to a decision, when supper was over they sought Golden Hair, and Mexican Joe said:

"We have come, Golden Hair, to say that we must at once make some move to throw Buffalo Bill off our trail."

"That man seems to frighten you terribly, Mexican Joe."

"I grant it, Golden Hair, for I know him."

"And I know him too," added Texas Kit.

"What do you know about him?"

"That what he sets out to do he does, and if the first stage, finding that the other did not arrive, put right back, they got to the scene in time to take our trail at daylight."

"And if they did, will not the Navaho scheme in breaking the trail throw them off completely?"

"What if Buffalo Bill had left the stage and hung back as a spy on the second one, for he is as cunning as an Indian, he could have followed right on after us, marking his trail well, and, from a hiding-place seen the raising of the horses from the stream to the rocks, yes, and can even now be in plain view of our camp-fires," and Mexican Joe spoke most impressively, and his words caused the woman to turn pale, while she glanced uneasily about her, as though she imagined herself even then under the dreaded scout's eye.

"You do not wish to lose the vantage we have gained, Golden Hair, by being too sure that we are not already trailed," said Tremain, speaking for the first time.

"No, I see that I was too sure of my game, so what is it that you deem best to be done, Mexican Joe?" and the woman showed that she was really anxious.

"My friend, Texas Kit, suggests a very good plan," the Mexican said.

"Let us hear what it is, Texas Kit."

"My idea is that Buffalo Bill is on our trail, and if so he is coming with, or having men enough follow him to wipe us out, or rather capture and hang us."

"This we know; but to your plan."

"It is that you start the Navaho chief on foot, for he leaves no trail and is a swift and untiring runner, as you know, on to the third relay of horses."

"Well?"

"It is fifty miles from here and he can make it by the time the sun is an hour high to-morrow."

"Yes, he can easily do so I am sure."

"The horses there are fresh and he can push them to a certain point northward, and to which I will direct him."

"Yes."

"We can go on to-night with our horses, driving all with us, for a few hours will have rested them, and push on until daylight, when we will have gotten some forty or fifty miles from here."

"Why go to the north?"

"I will explain that fully."

"If we push on westward then they know where we go; but by going north it will be thought that we are pushing on into Colorado, and we can desert our horses near the Navaho Indian country."

"Desert our horses?" said the woman in surprise.

"Yes, every one of them, for that is my plan to throw Buffalo Bill off our trail."

"How will that do it?"

The Navahoes are our friends, his foes, and he does not know we are any of the Gold-Hunters' party he wiped out a few weeks since, and so will suppose the Indians attacked us, or forced us to leave our horses."

"Yes."

"He will not, daring as he is, dare venture into the Indian country, but should he capture more red-skins they must be posted by the Navaho chief to pretend not to have seen us."

"Of course they will believe that we are either killed by the Navahoes or sheltered by them, and it may result in the leading of an army up there, and while the troops and red-skins are fighting we will be safe beyond the Colorado on Kaibob Mountain."

"But how will we get there, Texas Kit?"

"Why we can walk twenty miles, or more, after deserting our horses, and get the Indians to give us a lift on ponies to the bluffs of the San Juan River, where the Navaho will carry the third relay of horses to meet us."

"By the time we reach there they will be well rested and we can push on across the Colorado at the Mormon Ferry and thence down near your home, Golden Hair, up into Kaibob Mountain, where I have been and know the country. What do you say?"

"If that does not outwit Buffalo Bill nothing will," was Golden Hair's emphatic response.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TEXAS KIT'S TRAIL.

It was clear that Golden Hair and all the others were deeply impressed with the plan proposed by Texas Kit, as Golden Hair's words proved.

She decided to at once call the Navaho chief into the council and ask him his opinion of their passing through the country of his people.

The Navaho came accompanied by Little Coyote, and he listened with deep attention to the plan.

Then he said:

"Good! heap good!"

"Buffalo Bill great white chief, follow trail of bird, and heap brave."

"Have many scalps at his belt and his eye kill dead at every time."

"Must fool Great White Chief or get all our scalps, so heap good goes Texas tell."

"But can we pass through your country, chief?"

"Me give Golden Hair red arrow with white feathers."

"It tell my people that she pale-face, the white feathers, the red arrow my people, and snow and blood mix well, for Golden Hair and her people our friends."

"That will protect us then?"

"Yes, my people help her and kill Buffalo Bill, have big scalp-dance when he dead, so heap glad."

"He good man to red-skin in peace, but he heap bad man in war, kill heap, kill many times."

"Then that settles it, Navaho, we take the trail laid out by Texas Kit."

"Yes, Texas know."

"And you will go to the third relay to-night?"

"Navaho ready."

"On foot, remember, so as to leave no trail branching off."

"All same, foot or pony."

"And you will take your horses to the San Juan Bluffs, Navaho, and await us there?"

"Good water and grass there—me go and wait."

"All right, chief, you can start when you please and Little Coyote will go with us."

"Me tell something," suddenly said the Indian.

"Here snow and blood arrow; keep it; he heap good when you want it."

"But Golden Hair and her people leave ponies on trail, let Little Coyote lead them far on for many miles."

"Then Little Coyote leave ponies with saddle and all, and he come on to San Juan Bluffs."

"A good idea, Navaho, if we did not have such heavy packs," said Mexican Joe.

The chief held up one finger after the other until he counted off Tremain, Mexican Joe, Texas Kit, the three other outlaws, the prisoner and Golden Hair.

Then he placed a stick with one end on his shoulder and the other end on Tremain's shoulder, while he said:

"Seven big braves carry packs until get ponies from my people."

"You are right, and I guess we can stand it even if we have to bury the gold and come back after it," said Tremain.

And this having been decided upon the Navaho started off on his mission to the third relay of horses which his squaw had charge of.

He started off in a trot right out of camp, and seeing him go, from where he was lying upon his blanket, Captain De Villers, who had also watched the council of war from a distance, muttered:

"That pow-wow meant devilry of some kind and that cunning red-skin has gone off to execute it."

"Ah! that tallest masked fellow calls out that we resume our march in a couple of hours, and all this is to throw Buffalo Bill off the trail."

"Well, let them plot, plan and execute, but I do not believe they can circumvent Buffalo Bill try as they may, and I am growing more and more interested in the game that they are playing, and to know what trump cards the scout will win with, for I am sure that before this he and the gallant Ames are on my track, yes, and my noble Mildmay also, for he will not return to England without me."

"Now, to get what sleep I can," and Captain De Villers with perfect control of his senses sunk to sleep almost immediately.

He was awakened by one of his guards who told him that the march was to begin at once.

"What, so soon?"

"You must feel that Buffalo Bill is creeping up in his chase of you."

"Now, you shut up, or you'll go whar Buffalo Bill will start for if he catches up with us."

"Yes, to the gallows—to take you!" was the quick retort of Captain De Villers and he got cursed for his wit.

But he laughed lightly at the outlaw's threat, mounted his horse and was manacled as before.

The march at once began, Texas Kit now leading, as they were to follow the trail which he had planned for them to take.

The horses were fairly well rested, but, as they were to be left on the trail they were not spared, but pushed on as rapidly as it was possible to drive them and have them last as far as they were needed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FLIGHT ON FOOT.

MEXICAN JOE and Texas Kit both felt better, at the change of the place of retreat, for being thorough plainmen they knew the danger of a force guided by Buffalo Bill following them.

What other scouts might overlook he would not, and a cunning schemer himself in border warfare, he would think of every plan that another might.

There was little danger, however, when he saw the trail led toward Colorado and the horses deserted there, but that he would believe that the fugitives had really gone in that direction, were sheltered by the Indians, or had been massacred by them.

Then were there three false trails for him to take and it was hardly likely that he would not take one of them.

Tremain was also pleased at the turn in their trail, for he had already seen enough to know that Mexican Joe and Texas Kit were parted, and though Golden Hair was a wonderful woman in her way, and knew much about the country and of wild life, she was not posted as regarded the plaincraft as were her two guides.

When Navaho had agreed with them, Tremain was certain that Golden Hair's ambition to be all in all of the expedition, to be the one upon whom every one must cling, was leading her into a grave error.

This the woman also realized, and she yielded to the others, feeling that she had

too much at stake to be stubborn when she risked losing all by so doing.

She rode along with a look that was by no means cheerful, for she felt for the present her power had departed, for it had been her intention to go straight on to the Colorado, believing that the rapidity of her flight would prevent capture, and once in the wilds of the Grand Canyon country no one could find them and she would be safe.

Setting the pace Texas Kit pushed along as hard as the horses could stand it.

They did not halt for rest until they had been hours on their way and then they had breakfast at a spring and the horses got a chance to quench their thirst and get a few mouthfuls of grass, for there was little to be found in that barren land.

Again pushing on they did not halt until Texas Kit said the horses were dead beat.

They had changed from animal to animal after every few miles, but the pace had been a killing one, and it was hard for the two men who drove the loose horses to keep them within sight, and a couple had been abandoned on the trail utterly used up.

When Texas Kit halted he said:

"Now, Golden Hair, we must make temporary moccasins of blankets, and leave this spot by different trails, heading for yonder mountain."

"It is ten miles away and we can reach there by night."

"We are liable to run upon the Navahoes beyond that range, so we must all be together then and discover what virtue there is in the red and white arrow of the chief, and I think it is great, for I have heard that there is such a badge of safety held in the tribe as sacred, and that only a few of the head men are allowed to have them."

"After reaching the range we can resume our regular footgear, and will need to do so, as our blanket shoes will be about gone."

Then turning to Little Coyote he told the lad, after waiting long enough to give the horses a rest that would carry them on in a walk until night, he would push ahead until he came to the Canyon Largo and there leave them with saddles and bridles all on those that had been ridden.

When he had done so, he was to push ahead toward the rendezvous where they were all to meet his father and mother, at the bluffs of the San Juan, and they would wait for him there, but if he secured a pony from his people they would not have to wait long.

Proud of the mission he was intrusted with, Little Coyote saw the others, their feet muffled in blanket shoes, start off on their journey afoot.

The six men were well loaded down with the packs of provisions and camp outfit, but they were content to carry them, while Golden Hair also did her share and the prisoner was made to carry a burden as well.

He did not refuse, simply obeyed without any comment, for Captain De Villers was a philosopher.

He went along with Golden Hair, his feet also blanketed, and he was warned to make no tracks purposely, or it would go hard with him.

"All right, my manly fair one, I'll be cautious, for I am not building up for myself any more trouble than I have at present," he said, pleasantly.

The others went by different trails, two by two, and the foot-march was begun.

It was near sunset when footsore and weary the fugitives began to straggle in at the base of the hill where Texas Kit told them there was a small stream and a grove of quaking-aspen trees.

They went into camp at once, for they were as hungry as tired, and with a feeling of comparative safety decided to remain there all night and strike out in the morning through the Indian country and put the red and white arrow to a test.

CHAPTER XXV.

PUT TO THE TEST.

MEXICAN JOE and Texas Kit divided the guard duty between them that night, and yet they saw nothing to disturb them.

Awaking the others at dawn they at once set to work to get breakfast, and resuming their discarded shoes, they started upon the

march once more expecting each moment to come upon the Indians, for the country was no longer barren, ahead of them, and they knew that one of the Navaho villages was not very far distant from them.

Texas Kit and Mexican Joe were ahead, and they were seen to halt, after having gone a couple of miles.

"Come here, Golden Hair," said Texas Kit, and the woman went forward and joined them.

"Do you see that Indian yonder on horse back relieved against the trees?"

"I see him."

"He has not seen us, so do you go for word and meet him."

"Hold your hands up as you approach him, and the arrow between your fingers."

"He will then not run away to give an alarm, and under his charge we can go on without being greeted with a shot from ambush."

"You have picked up some of the Navaho lingo, so talk to him in his own tongue, for a hundred to one that he cannot speak a word of English."

"Now go, for he is about to ride away, and signal to us when you wish us to come to you."

The woman went at once away from the others, walking boldly and with her hands above her head, the red and white arrow in her hands.

The Indian was not watchful, for he did not expect to see a foe there, and was watching some antelope in another direction.

As he turned to ride away the woman hailed him.

He started, wheeled his pony quickly and gazed at her in amazement while he held his rifle ready for instant use.

Seeing that her attitude was one of peace he still held his ground, and thus awaited her coming.

He had forgotten all about the antelope in his desire to face the strange pale face whom he saw coming alone into his own country.

Boldly went Golden Hair forward, and at last when within a hundred feet of her his keen eyes detected that she held in her hand the sacred red and white arrow of his people, so he at once lowered his rifle, elevated his hands in token of a peaceful weapon and awaited her closer approach.

Under the tuition of the three Indians, who dwelt with her, Golden Hair had learned to speak the Navaho tongue well, so she said:

"The pale-face greets the Navaho, her red brother."

"Has he heard of the Chief Navaho Captain?"

"The Bending Bow knows well the Chief Navaho Captain, whose village was wiped out by the pale-face soldiers, and who would have been slain with his squaw and son, had not he been saved by a woman of the Mormon white-faces to the north, and taken to her home."

"He dwells in the tepee of the Golden Hair yet, but the Navahoes love the Red Captain well, and they are the friend of the Golden Hair," said the Indian, speaking slowly and with dignity.

"The Bending Bow now looks upon the face of the Golden Hair, who is his friend."

The Indian gazed with interest upon the face of the woman, evidently impressed by it.

She had given the Navaho Red Captain, as the chief was called, a home with her for himself, wife and son, and often had she proven the friend of the Navahoes.

With the chief at her cabin, he could render more service to his people than in their village, for his village had been destroyed several years before by an attack of soldiers upon it, and, but for the Mormon woman the three Indians would have been also slain.

The Indian she then met had heard of the Golden Hair as a strange woman who lived to herself, never going near her own people, and dressing as a man.

She had curative powers that were wonderful, was something of a surgeon, and was also known as the Medicine Squaw by the Indians, whom she had often helped in sickness and when severely wounded in battle.

"The Golden Hair is welcome, and the Bending Bow will lead her to his tepee,

for she carries the Snow and Blood Arrow of his people."

"But the Golden Hair is not alone, for she has with her some of her braves of the pale-face race, and a prisoner."

"Will the Bending Bow welcome them, for it was the Navaho Red Captain who gave her this arrow."

"Let the Golden Hair bring her braves here and the Bending Bow will go and bring the chief to welcome her," said the Indian, not wishing to take too much upon himself in the way of hospitality that might get him into trouble.

"The Golden Hair will wait here with her people," said the woman, and the Bending Bow, with a word to his pony, darted over the ridge like the wind.

"The Red and White Arrow truly has the power the chief said that it would."

"Now to call up the others," and turning, Golden Hair beckoned for her comrades to approach, for she well knew that they were watching her closely.

At once Texas Kit and Mexican Joe stepped out of their place of hiding, and the others soon appeared, all carrying their burdens.

They had just reached the spot when Bending Bow was seen riding back, with a horseman by his side in the full war-paint and feathers of a chief.

Behind them followed half a hundred mounted horses, and they came on with the appearance of being ready to greet either friend or foe, for they were prepared for war, and the faces of the party looked anxious, for they did not know that the arrow had been put to the test.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RED-SKIN HOSPITALITY.

It was with dread that even Golden Hair saw the large force of mounted Indians approaching, for it did not seem to her that so many were needed to extend a hospitable welcome to herself and her companions.

But then she argued that the chief wished to impress her with his importance, and so she breathed more freely, while Mexican Joe said:

"It looks dubious, pard."

"Yes, they have an ugly look," Tremain said, meaning it in a double sense.

The trio who had come from the stage town were turning an ashen hue, with dread of losing their scalps, while Captain De Villers was as cool as an icicle.

"It is all right, pards, for if they meant war they would have opened when they came over the ridge."

"No, they mean all right, and are only putting on style, for I know them," and Texas Kit's words had a reassuring effect upon all.

As the Indians approached, Golden Hair stepped out from among her comrades and holding out the arrow said:

"The Golden Hair seeks aid from the great chief of the Navahoes."

The chief's dark locks were streaked with gray, but he was upright and sat his pony with no indication of age, while he was rigged out with a grandeur which revealed that he still had the vanity of a young buck.

They came forward at a gallop, as though the more to impress the pale-faces with their grandeur, and the chief halting suddenly, just before Golden Hair, lowered his lance with the courtly grace of a knight of old, and said:

"The Golden Hair is welcome to the country of the Navahoes."

"The Medicine Squaw is known to the Bad Buffalo."

Thus introducing himself and showing that he knew who she was, the Bad Buffalo dismounted and approached her.

The woman extended her hand, and taking a ring from her finger, in which there was a ruby, she placed it on the chief's finger and said:

"Let the great chief Bad Buffalo and the Golden Hair be friends, for she loves his people."

"See, she bears this arrow of snow and blood, given her by the Navaho Red Captain, and she has foes upon her track, she left her horses far from here, and came on foot to ask the Bad Buffalo to let her and her people have ponies to carry them on to the

lodge of the Medicine Squaw, so that she may escape from the great white chief Buffalo Bill, and whom the red-skins call Pa-he-has-ka."

The chief's face grew dark at the mention of the name of Buffalo Bill, for he knew that he had guided the expedition some weeks before to wipe out the village of Flying Fox, who was the ally of the renegade white outlaws in the Colorado country.

"Does Pa-he-has-ka come again into the country of the Navahoes?" asked Bad Buffalo.

"He is now on the trail of the Golden Hair and her braves, for we have a friend of Pa-he-has-ka here a prisoner."

The old chief and his warriors cast longing eyes upon the prisoner, who met their gaze with calm indifference, and then they looked over the rest of the party.

The three outlaws that had joined the band at the stage-coach terminus, got but a passing glance, but the three, Mexican Joe, Texas Kit and Tremain, were looked upon with suspicion and awe combined.

Seeing this the Golden Hair said:

"Those three braves are known to the prisoner, and they do not yet wish to have him know who they are."

"Will the Bad Buffalo be the friend of the Golden Hair and give her power to go to her tepee, and not let his braves speak of seeing her and her braves?"

"The Bad Buffalo has spoken, and he is the friend of the Golden Hair and her braves."

"Let them come to his village with him."

He led the way, some of his braves relieving the party of their burdens, and after a walk of a mile they came in sight of a large village situated in a crescent-shaped valley, sloping down to a creek.

Large herds of ponies were feeding far up the valley, there were some few hundreds of beef cattle, stolen by the Indians, and the village numbered several hundred tepees, and all the warriors, squaws and children were on the lookout to see the pale-face strangers, for the news spread by Bending Bow that Golden Hair, the Medicine Squaw, was coming to see them, had been told throughout the entire camp.

Conducting the party to his own lodge, the Bad Buffalo at once had new tepees put up for his guests, and told them that they were welcome as long as they chose to remain.

But Golden Hair explained that they were anxious to be on their way, and so the chief ordered an immediate feast to be prepared, and the ponies to be ready afterward, so that they could go some miles upon their way before nightfall.

The feast was a revelation in its way of Indian culinary art, but though the fare was not very tempting, the intention was good, and the party left with thanks for the hospitality extended to them, mounted upon good ponies, and with an Indian guide to lead them to the Bluffs of the San Juan River.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETREAT TO THE COLORADO.

GOLDEN HAIR was delighted with her visit to the Indian village.

A scheming woman of the most ambitious and worst type, she saw her own protection and advancement in being the warm friend of the red-skins, who, the foes of the soldiers and settlers, were, strange to say, not on hostile terms with the Mormons.

Her knowledge gained of medicine, when she went into a London hospital to study as a nurse, as a means of seeking revenge against the man who had cast her adrift and wedded a titled woman, served her well in helping the sick and injured, and she told Bad Buffalo that she would always be ready to lend her aid as the Medicine Squaw, while at the same time she did not anger the Indian medicine-men by what she did, but instead won their confidence in her.

The Indian guide sent by Bad Buffalo took the party to a pleasant camping-ground for the night.

Water and grass were in plenty, and there was ample wood for camp-fires, so that they all indulged in a good supper.

No guard was set, as the guide told them

*The Long Hair. Given to Buffalo Bill by Chief Red Cloud.—THE AUTHOR.

here was no need of one in the Navaho country, so that all got a good rest.

The prisoner had, to his own delight, not been forced to join in the Indian feast, where stewed dog-meat was the choicest dish, so he was ready for the supper of broiled bacon, hoe-cake, antelope-steaks and coffee.

His dangerous position did not seem to wear upon his mind to a degree to render him at all impressed by it, for he took things as he found them.

He had given no trouble whatever to his captors, asked no favors, did what he was told to do, and simply bided his time.

But he was watched with eagle eyes, for he was known to be a dangerous man, and the slightest chance to escape that came up he would promptly take advantage of all knew.

Could he catch his guard off watch, it would be the work of an instant, manacled as he was, to make the effort at least to escape.

Starting in the morning at sunrise the Indian guide led his white followers toward the San Juan River, intending to strike it near its mouth, for the place appointed for the Navaho chief Red Captain to meet them, was not far above where the stream flowed into the Colorado.

It was the second evening before the rendezvous was reached, and the fresh trail coming from the southward showed that the Navaho had already reached the place ahead of him.

When Texas Kit led the way to the spot where he had told the Navaho chief they would meet him, they beheld the Indian and his wife standing by a camp-fire and calmly watching their approach, and evidently glad to see that they had passed through their country without molestation.

They rode up and greeted the chief and Sun Eyes pleasantly, and learned that the Indians were but half a day ahead of them.

They had the horses from the third relay with them, and the animals were comparatively fresh.

The Indian guide greeted the Navaho chief and Sun Eyes with unconcealed pleasure, and the two men sat up late talking together, after all the rest of the camp had retired.

It was not sunrise the next morning when the start was made down the San Juan to the Colorado, and so on down to the crossing of the latter river at the point not very far from where the Gold-Hunter Outlaws had had their retreat.

The Indian guide had gone back, driving the chief's ponies before him, but had not gone far when he came upon two-score warriors in camp.

They had been sent by the chief Bad Buffalo to be on the safe side, and watch the pale-faces until they were out of the immediate Navaho country.

The cunning old fellow did not doubt Golden Hair, but he did wish to discover if the three masked men were all right, and went on with the woman and her party.

The Indian guide knew that they were there, so showed no surprise at seeing them, while he was glad to have aid in driving the horses back to the village.

Texas Kit again in the lead, the party pushed on down the wild and cliff-guarded banks of the Colorado, all showing delight at the clever manner in which they had covered up their trail and thrown Buffalo Bill wholly off the scent.

At the noon camp a horseman was seen approaching, but Red Captain at once called out that it was Little Coyote, so the alarm was stayed.

When the Indian had rode up it was seen that his horse was broken down, and Little Coyote's face was haggard, for the brave young fellow had held on without rest after leaving the horses, and securing a pony in the village, had given neither himself or the animal any rest until he overtook the party.

Explaining how well the trail had been broken, Captain De Villers, who heard him, muttered:

"I fear now that Buffalo Bill will never be able to track us."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

REVEALED BY CHANCE.

WHEN the pursuers found themselves at fault on their reaching the stream, they held

a consultation, the result of which was that the Surgeon Scout and Buffalo Bill decided to go up and down the creek, each having a scout to accompany him.

Buffalo Bill suggested that he really believed that the outlaws were making for the northern country, and not going that way as a blind, intending to double on their tracks and return.

"I will take the other shore going down, Surgeon Powell, and you take the one going up, and it would be just as well for us to take two of the boys with us, one to ride down and up the stream, and the others to go along this shore.

"In this way we will have six of us on the search and if our half-dozen pair of eyes do not find where the outlaws left the stream then they took wings and flew."

Not wishing to delay the four scouts were called, two of them mounted, and reported to their respective leaders.

"Keep as near opposite to us as possible, boys, and report everything you see that is not just as it should be," ordered Buffalo Bill.

Both he and Surgeon Powell were then set across the stream, by leaping up behind the mounted scout, and the search for the lost trail was begun.

The two leaders set the pace and they went slowly, for they did not want to leave their work to do over again.

The nature of the banks was such that those following along the land had to make turns and climb rocks, but they stuck to it manfully, stopping for quite a while when they came to places where the outlaws could have left the water.

Thus they progressed for several miles and had spent over two hours in the work, without finding the slightest trace of a trail.

Coming to a break in the rocky shore Buffalo Bill, who was several hundred feet away from the stream turned into it to see how his comrades had fared, for they had kept up communication only by calls.

The swale led him to the stream over a rocky and pebble soil that seemed as hard as adamant.

The scout muttered to himself as he went along:

"This is a good place to leave the water, if the bank there is not too high and steep."

A moment after he came to a flat rock which went off steep to the water, some six feet below.

"No getting out here," he said as he saw the rock and its height; but suddenly something attracted his gaze and he got down and began to search the face of the rock closely.

"Some one has surely ridden to this spot, for these marks on the rocks were made by iron-shod hoofs.

"Here is where a horse was turned suddenly and almost made the whole track of the iron shoe.

"I must see what more I can discover—ah! what is this—an English guinea as I live!"

The scout quickly took from the ground a gold-piece.

It was an English guinea and had a small hole in it, as though it had been used as a charm on a watch-chain.

In that gold-piece Buffalo Bill saw enough to give a signal to the scout in the stream and the one on the opposite bank to halt as near him as they could.

"Ho, Little Rebel, I have made a find.

"Ride up to this rock as close as you can, and you, Ernest, halt on the other shore."

The men obeyed, and standing on the flat rock Buffalo Bill called out:

"I have found an English guinea, with a hole in it, here on this rock."

"Did not Captain De Villers wear one about his neck, for I heard so?"

"Yes, chief, he told me it was a luck-piece, the date being the year of his birth, and that he would never part with it, as it had been his good fortune many a time."

"All right, here is the piece, and here is where the outlaws left the water."

"Without wings, chief?" called out Ernest from the other shore.

"They wanted it to appear to us that they could not leave the stream here; but Little Rebel, ride close up to this rock and examine it."

"There are marks on it, sir, as though from iron hoofs striking it."

"That settles it, for they left the water right here, harnessing a horse and drawing him up, for I have tried that trick several times myself, and it is strange that it just occurred to me that they would go out at a point that seemed impossible.

"Rebel, put Ernest across here and then ride back and recall the Surgeon Scout and his men, while tell Lieutenant Ames that I hope to send him good news soon and be prepared to move camp."

Ernest leaped up behind Little Rebel, rode across, raised himself to a standing position on the back of the horse and Buffalo Bill without an effort drew him upon the rock.

Then Little Rebel recrossed the stream, leaving the water and making for the camp at a gallop, leaving Ernest with the chief to continue their search for further proof that the outlaws had gone out of the stream at that point, and from there pushed on to the northward.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LUCK PIECE.

NOTHING but the keen eyes of Buffalo Bill would ever have detected a trail from the rock on the stream back inland.

But having found the gold-piece, and the proof that the outlaws had left the water where it seemed impossible for horses to do so, Buffalo Bill saw that he had very cunning and clever people to follow.

They had made a skillful attack on the coach and been successful, and now, in their retreat, they were showing most consummate skill.

He got down on his knees and searched the rock thoroughly, Little Rebel the scout also doing so.

Rising, step by step Buffalo Bill went back from the stream several hundred feet, and then he halted and said:

"You have made some discovery, Little Rebel."

"Yes, sir, I was waiting to see where the same thing occurred again."

"A hoof-track, and no other near it?"

"That is just it, sir."

"I have seen two, one plainly marked in the road, and just look here."

"It seems as if something had been dragged along here?"

"Not exactly, but blankets have been laid down for the horses to walk on, and folded as they were once or twice, a horse would step off of them."

"See, here is the imprint of the cloth where the sand is soft."

"I see it, sir, and you have read the story, chief, as no one else could read it."

"We had the clue in this gold-piece, and the marks which told us where the outlaws left the water."

"It will be easy work trailing now, for they will not believe that we will search out here for a trail."

"The land aids them, for only a shod horse will leave a track."

"Yes, but they will leave enough for us to follow, and I will keep on the trail while you go and ask Lieutenant Ames to come here and camp, for this is about the last water we will find for many a long while."

"There is grass here, and wood as well, so we will camp, then hunt the trail well ahead, and be ready to make a start before daylight, and reach where we leave off by the time it is light."

"Explain this to Lieutenant Ames, Little Rebel, and then come on after me, for I'll mark my trail."

Little Rebel started back for the camp, while Buffalo Bill bent every energy to finding the outlaws' trail.

It was arduous and slow work, yet step by step he picked out a track here and there in the rough and hard soil, and in an hour had progressed half a mile.

But there had been one surest of all indications to the scout that he was on the right track, and that might never have been observed by any one else.

That was here and there, where horses had been halted for a few moments on the sand, little places which could have only been made by dripping water.

They were not visible save right where a halt had been made, and when the horses were in line, so that the little drip-holes were in a row.

Buffalo Bill smiled grimly as he saw this telltale proof that the outlaws had left the stream at the flat rock and had come that way.

But on he went until he reached a point where no tracks were visible.

"This kind of country extends as far as the eye can reach, but yonder range to the right, and canyon in the plain to the left would indicate that they have kept the valley.

"Here is where we must divide forces to-morrow, one party holding straight on to the volcanic mountain ahead, another branching off to follow along the range and the third along the canyon, and meeting yonder.

"I will mark this spot for we must start from here at dawn."

Piling up some rocks as a mark, and placing his handkerchief on top of them so that it could be seen in semi-darkness, the scout retraced his way toward the spring which he had selected as the night's camping-ground.

He was nearing the spring when he beheld four persons coming along on foot, evidently following his trail over the rocky and rugged ground, for he had marked it in various ways as he came along.

They were Lieutenant Ames, Lord Mildmay, Surgeon Powell and Little Rebel.

Seeing him returning they halted and awaited his coming, while Lord Mildmay called out:

"Cody, you could get a colonelcy in our army for this day's work and you deserve it."

The scout smiled and responded:

"Meaning no reflection, Lord Mildmay, I would rather be what I am, chief of scouts, for the life suits me, the work fascinates me and I can be of service here while in another position I might be a gigantic failure."

"Not you, Cody; but you have done marvelous work, as Lord Mildmay and I went over it with Surgeon Powell, and he too gives you the greatest credit."

"Surgeon Powell is prejudiced in my favor, lieutenant," modestly replied the scout.

"Without prejudice, Bill, it is a wonder you ever struck that trail," answered the Surgeon Scout.

"Why did not Little Rebel tell you about the gold-piece, for that did the work, being my clue."

"What gold-piece?" asked Lieutenant Ames.

"This one, an English guinea."

"It is De Villers's, for I recognize it."

"He got it in a peculiar way, in India, for he was attacked by a tiger and we all believed it was the end of poor Trevor, as he had but one shot and our guns were empty."

"But that one shot killed the man-eater, and just as he was within ten feet of him."

"The natives were crazy with delight, for the tiger was known as the man-eater, and he had killed numbers of them."

"With the crowd that came out from the village was a young girl, and taking from about her neck a chain with this gold-piece, she fastened it around De Villers's neck asking him to wear it for her, for he had avenged the death of her young husband whom the beast had destroyed."

"De Villers took the gold-piece and gave her several others in exchange, which she refused, saying that they would break the charm of good fortune."

"By a strange coincidence the guinea was coined the year he was born and he has clung to it religiously ever since, and now it must have become detached from the chain and fallen where you picked it up, or perhaps, he was robbed of it and the robber lost it," and the voice of Lord Mildmay saddened as he thought of what might be his friend's fate.

"No, I believe that he dropped it, trusting in his luck-piece to lead us on the trail just where it seemed it must be lost completely," remarked Buffalo Bill, and all were glad to take this view of the case and hope that Captain De Villers would continue to mark the trail as he went along.

CHAPTER XXX.

LIKE HOUNDS ON THE TRACK.

THE start was made the next morning before light, with a breakfast and dinner already cooked, and canteens well filled, for they knew that wood and water would be scarce in the country through which they were going.

The light was just high enough to show that the night was passed, when, divided into three parties the expedition set off from the mark which Buffalo Bill had made on the end of the trail he had been able to follow.

Surgeon Powell, a scout and several soldiers were to take the way toward the treeless ridge on the right, which came off abruptly in a cliff.

The party to the left was led by Buffalo Bill, and with him went Lord Mildmay a scout and four soldiers.

Lord Mildmay had expressed a desire to see just how Buffalo Bill followed a trail where none was visible, so the scout had invited him to accompany his party to go along the edge of the canyon.

The balance of the outfit, under Lieutenant Ames, were to hold straight on to the volcanic mountain thirty miles away and there the others were to join them.

So the three parties set out; and soon there were many miles separating those who were tracking the cliff range and the canyon.

Just before reaching the volcanic mountain, one of the scouts with Lieutenant Ames pointed to a streak of sand which lay at the base of the fields of sand.

"That will tell the story," he said, and Scout Bony rode rapidly toward it.

"It did tell the story, for the trail of the outlaws was seen there, coming from toward the canyon, and following up the sandy wash as being better for the feet of their horses."

"We camp right here," said Lieutenant Ames, and a dry camp was made, for water grass and wood there was none.

Two hours after Buffalo Bill's party appeared, and a look was sufficient to show that they were following the trail in the sand, having struck it some distance away.

"Would it not be well, Lieutenant Ames, to follow on up the cliffs, for Surgeon Powell will have to cross this sand formation above and will strike the trail, and up near the cliffs we may find a water pool."

"It is just what we will do, Cody," assured Lieutenant Ames, and the two parties mounting were soon on their way once more.

Several miles away, as they approached the cliffs they saw a horseman approaching and he was recognized as one of the scouts.

"Lieutenant Ames, Doctor Powell requests you to come to where he is, as he has found the trail, and wishes you to send some one to hasten the chief on, but I see he is here," said the scout.

"Yes, Ernest, it seems we have all found the trail, and I trust we can stick to it now," and the horses were urged to a faster gait.

An hour after at a pass among the cliffs, they found Surgeon Powell and his party, they having come upon the trail just where the sandy wash ran away from the cliffs, and, in wet weather had followed the washes down the plain for miles.

As there was only a rock tank of mucky water* there, but which the horses relished, the party pushed on for a better camping place, and having the trail now in plain view to the keen eyes of the scouts, it was decided to camp only when night came on, unless they should again lose the trail, which it was not supposed they would do, for all believed that the outlaws felt safe in the thought that they had prevented all further pursuit by their clever desire to hide their leaving the river.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell again led the advance, some distance ahead of the others, so that they would not be crowded too closely, for what might be a plainly marked trail to them was certainly not to Lord Mildmay and the soldiers.

The sun was beginning to throw long

*In wet weather the water wears holes in the rocks, and these sometimes remain filled for months, and are called tanks. —THE AUTHOR.

shadows, when the two leaders were seen to halt for a moment.

Then they urged their horses ahead at a gallop, and turning a bend were out of sight.

Arriving at the bend the party beheld some woodland at the base of a cliff, and which was the head of a small valley.

A small stream flowed from the cliffs, and there was plenty of grass for a short stay there.

"The remains of several camp-fires were visible, and by them the two leaders were standing."

"We have made a rich find, Ames," called out Surgeon Powell, as that officer and Lord Mildmay advanced at a gallop.

"Yes, struck it rich, sir, for here we find wood, water and grass, and I believe the last camping-place of the outlaws, for if they remained here all night they are not now over a day's journey ahead, even with their fresh horses, for they got another relay of animals at this point."

"I tell you, lieutenant, that scheme to kidnap Captain De Villers was no sudden affair, but well plotted and carried out so far without a hitch," and Buffalo Bill spoke warmly.

"Well, Cody, I begin to agree with you; but what is to be done now?"

"Camp here, sir, for the horses sadly need it, and push on to-morrow," was the scout's reply.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SURPRISE.

As has been doubtless surmised, the scene of the camp at the spring was the spot where the outlaws had had their second relay of horses, brought there by Little Coyote.

The scouts quickly discovered that there had been a camp there for several days, prior to the coming of the road-agents, and knew that it must have been a relay of horses for their use on arriving there.

As the trail showed that horses had come there from the westward, twelve in number, this same number was added to the animals ridden there by the outlaws, for the departing trail was a longer one, showing that they had left none behind them.

Thinking that the fugitives were pretty certain that they had thrown their pursuers off their track, Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell considered that they had camped there all night, when it will be remembered that they had pushed right on after a couple of hours' rest, Texas Kit having urged it and his plan of flight having been carried out.

This put them further in advance of their pursuers than the latter believed them to be.

The situation was fully discussed in camp that night after supper, and with the broad trail before them, of over two-score horses, counting the two relays of animals, and those they had when they attacked the stage, as well as the coach-horses, the pursuers would not have the slightest trouble in following them, unless they discovered that they had made another effort to throw them off the track.

The trail, Buffalo Bill had noticed, still went westward, and this gave rise to the belief that they were making for the Colorado Canyon country so as to elude all pursuit and come out at their leisure.

In the camp Surgeon Powell picked up a button, and Lord Mildmay at once recognized it as one off of his hunting suit which he loaned Captain De Villers.

"Poor Trevor, I fear harm has befallen him," he said sadly.

"On the contrary, Lord Mildmay, the finding of this button is most reassuring," said Surgeon Powell.

"How so, doctor?" asked the English nobleman.

"Cody found a guinea that was Captain De Villers's pocket piece, or luck coin."

"Yes."

"Now that might have been regarded as an accident, it having been lost by one of the robbers."

"I see."

"But Cody did not believe that it was a lost coin, but told me his belief was that Captain De Villers had dropped it."

"It seems hardly possible to me."

"Yet to us, Lord Mildmay, it appears that he dropped it on purpose, and the finding of this button verifies the belief."

"How so, doctor?"

"You explain, Bill."

"Why simply. Lord Mildmay, Captain De Villers has been long enough on the frontier to understand our ways, and he is a good trailer himself."

"I do not doubt it."

"Being a skilled plainsman he knew that those who followed his captors needed some guidance where they could get it."

"He had to be most careful in what way he marked the trail, but leaving his guinea and now this button, it convinces me that he dropped it for us to pick up."

"It tells me that he is alive, and that when he can do so he will mark the trail, risky as it is to him."

"But who do you think his captors can be?" asked Lieutenant Ames, and he added:

"That coach was surely known to hold Captain De Villers, and the other was unmolested."

"It is hard to say who his captors are, lieutenant, but I have an idea it will prove to be outlaws who had spies at the fort, knew who Captain De Villers is, and planned to capture him, going ahead to do so by waylaying the coach."

"And the mysterious Golden Hair?"

"He is still a mystery, sir, though, for some reason I cannot but connect him with the capture of Captain De Villers," Buffalo Bill remarked.

"The capture of the fugitives will tell," was the answer.

The next morning, with men and horses greatly refreshed and rested by the night's halt, the trail was again taken up, Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell in the lead.

"See there, Frank," and Buffalo Bill was glancing ahead as he spoke.

"Yes, Bill."

"Do you see which way that trail turns yonder?"

"To the northward as I live."

"It does, instead of holding on due west."

"What do you make out of that, Bill?"

"That the fugitives must be northern road-agents and gave us this long trail westward as a grand bluff."

"It would seem that way, Bill; but do you believe that it is so?"

"I do not."

"You have your reasons for not doing so?"

"Yes, for how could Colorado road-agents know about that particular stage, about Captain De Villers, just from the Colorado country, and how could they have gotten their relays of horses?"

"No, it is a great surprise to me to be on this trail leading northward, but I believe those fellows are from the West, renegades in the Navaho camps."

CHAPTER XXXII.

DANGER AHEAD.

The running of the trail to the north seemed to impress Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill's scouts just as it did the chief himself.

They all suspected some trickery in it, and Lieutenant Ames said:

"It would be well to watch out for an ambush, Cody, for we are nearing a dangerous country now, and if the outlaws are renegades they will ally with the Indians to entrap us."

"You are right, lieutenant, and I have a suggestion to make, if you please."

"Out with it, Bill, for your advice is never off the trail, I find."

"Well, sir, I would like to go ahead with Surgeon Powell, and two of my men to follow an hour behind us, the command keeping a couple of hours behind them."

"If there is an ambush we can discover it, and falling back on my two scouts can also give you warning to seek shelter for a fight, while a courier can ride with all speed for help from the fort, sir, and, if you retreat to the valley we have left, we can hold our position against an army of red-skins, for a few days at least, for we will have them to fear, not the outlaws."

"It is a good plan, Cody, and I will do as you say."

"You and Powell will go in advance, you

say, with two scouts to follow and then the rest of the command?"

"Yes, sir."

"I took good notice of the valley when we camped last night, and, as you say, we can hold at bay a large force by retreating into the canyon in which the spring is located, and there is grass and wood there as well as water, while the cliffs surrounding cannot be flanked."

"I was thinking of a place to retreat, if attacked by the red-skins, and so took in the advantages of the situation fully."

"I also did, sir, and it is a good place to remember."

"Now we will start ahead, sir."

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell then rode ahead together on the trail, discussing the situation as they went along.

Both, as experienced plainsmen, knew that they were taking big chances in going into the Indian country with so small a force, especially after the punishment inflicted upon Flying Fox and his people a few weeks before.

But they felt confident of retreating, if forced to do so, and being able to send for reinforcements.

Then too the trail led into the Indian country, and if the outlaws were not allies of the red-skins they would be supposed to be but the advance of a large force, and that would add to their safety, the Navahoes not believing that so small a number would dare venture into their country.

So on rode the two friends, their skilled eyes taking in the country, the trail and all that there was to see.

"Frank, do you believe those road-agents came from Colorado?" asked Buffalo Bill thoughtfully.

"I do not, though their retreat would vindicate it now."

"What is your idea regarding them?"

"From all I have seen and heard I believe them to be white renegades in the Indian country, for if not, would they dare come up here with not over a dozen men?"

"The thought has struck me that instead of relays of horses, which we supposed had been the case, they might have been other outlaws or Indians waiting at the two points, and if so that swells their force to considerable larger than ours."

"Yes, but you draw your conclusion from their having taken their tired horses along with them?"

"Yes, partly; but I believe we are gaining upon them, for this trail is not very many hours old, and more, I am sure that we are a day, if not a couple of days ahead of their expected time for us to come along, if they think we ever connected the trails at the stream at all."

"Then we have that in our favor, Bill, for we will come upon them unexpectedly."

"See, there was a halt here, and I have noticed from the tracks a temporary halt in several places before where there seemed to be no need of it."

"I observed the same thing, and those halts mean something we cannot now fathom; but there is a group of rocks ahead which the trail runs close to, but which we must flank beyond rifle range."

"You are right, for a dozen men could be ambushed in those rocks, Bill."

The two pards turned off obliquely and passed the rocks well out of range, Buffalo Bill riding some distance ahead, so if there were men discovered there, he could signal Surgeon Powell who would wheel and dash back with all speed to give the alarm to the scouts, who in turn would alarm Lieutenant Ames, while the chief would make his escape as best he could.

But the rocks were passed and not a sign of danger was visible, so the Surgeon Scout rode up alongside of Buffalo Bill once more to continue along on the trail.

The sun was just sinking when Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell came to a sudden halt.

The nature of the country had been improving the last few miles, and to the left was visible a range of hills that were green with foliage and broken with fertile vales.

Buffalo Bill knew that it was the border of the Navaho country, which was fertile, well-watered and a safe retreat for the red-skins.

But what had caused their sudden halt

upon the trail was at coming to the head of a valley and discovering several miles away a number of horses feeding.

This sight was a sure indication of danger ahead, for either they were the outlaws gone into camp, or a band of Indians, which, must be found out before an advance could be made.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RECONNOITERING AT NIGHT.

THE moment that Buffalo Bill's eyes fell upon the horses, he drew back suddenly, and both he and Surgeon Powell leaped from their saddles.

Each was armed with a gun, and they leveled them at the same moment, taking good care that any one on the watch could not see them.

"There are about forty horses there, Frank."

"Yes, Bill."

"And saddled?"

"Yes."

"That means that their riders are not far away."

"Sure."

"That is where they must be though my glass does not reveal any one there, Bill."

"Nor does mine; but those are not Indian ponies?"

"No, for they are most of them large animals, and they are not Indian saddles they have on them."

"You are right, and that means that they are our outlaws."

"It looks so."

"See, only a dozen seem to be saddled, and that about fits the number we gave the outlaws."

"Just about; but what is to be done, for it will be dark in half an hour?"

"I will leave my horse here and go on foot to reconnoiter, while you ride rapidly back and send one of the scouts to guide the command up here, for having been over the trail you can follow it in the darkness."

"I will, Bill, but do you go slow, for those fellows will have out a guard."

"I'll be cautious, and that is why I will not ride."

"I'll come back here when I see just where the camp is and who they are, though I feel assured that they are the horses of the outlaws."

"All right, Bill, I'll return here within an hour with the command," and wheeling his horse the Surgeon Scout rode rapidly back on the trail.

As night had drawn near the two scouts had come up closer to their leaders and the command had pressed on nearer to the two horsemen in their front, so that before Surgeon Powell had gone three miles he came upon the scouts.

One was sent back at once, while the other was halted there to wait for the coming of the command.

Surgeon Powell, after giving the one who waited some information regarding following the trail in the darkness, rode to the spot where he had left Buffalo Bill.

The scout had shown him where he would leave his horse, and there Surgeon Powell found the animal.

Dismounting, he left his horse with the scout's, and walked back to the trail, to await the coming of Lieutenant Ames.

He had an hour to wait when the bright starlight revealed a dark mass coming toward the ridge.

He was very cautious, for they might be Indians, so silently did they come on.

As they came near he saw that it was the command, and stepping out he met them.

"Well, Powell, Bony tells me that you have made an important discovery," said the lieutenant and all within hearing breathlessly awaited the answer.

"We think so, for there are about forty horses in the valley ahead, all loose and feeding, and about a dozen of them are saddled and bridled, the rest not being."

"What do you make of them, Surgeon Powell?"

"I think they must be the outlaw outfit, but Cody will return here and report, for he has gone on foot leaving his horse over the ridge yonder, where there is a little grass."

"Shall we go there and await Cody's re-

turn, for a guard can be put here to meet him?"

"Yes, and men and horses can rest, though it will be a dry camp for us," and Lieutenant Ames gave the order to move off the trail, dismount, unsaddle, take the horses out and the men to eat a cold supper while waiting.

A couple of the scouts did sentinel duty, one at the point to which Buffalo Bill was to return, the other near the temporary camp to guard the horses, and seated apart Lieutenant Ames, Lord Mildmay and Surgeon Powell discussed the situation in a low tone.

An hour passed thus, then another and another until midnight came and Buffalo Bill had not returned.

Surgeon Powell began to grow anxious and at last said:

"I cannot understand what detains Buffalo Bill so I will go and see what discovery I can make."

"Be careful, Powell, for you are too valuable a man to take any chances with your life."

"Thanks, Ames, I am never reckless you know."

"Yet one of the most daring men I ever met," and Lieutenant Ames and Lord Mildmay watched the Surgeon Scout depart with great regret.

They had a dread that harm had befallen Buffalo Bill, and for Surgeon Powell to run into the same danger was terrible to contemplate, while they could only remain there during the long hours of the night and await for daylight to see what had happened to their two splendid leaders in the rapid pursuit they had made.

So Frauk Powell disappeared in the darkness, also going on foot, and the hours began to glide away and the two did not return.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MIDNIGHT TRAIL.

WHEN Buffalo Bill left the spot where he had halted upon discovering the horses in the valley a long distance off, he made his way through the darkness to the fringe of timber bordering the stream that wound through the valley.

He wished to reach the timber as a shelter, and from there make his way along to a position opposite to the horses, for he felt certain that the camp could not be far away from them.

That they were the animals belonging to the outlaws, he felt convinced, for Indians had no such trappings as his glass had revealed were upon them.

It was a tramp of miles to reach the timber along the stream, but he made it in a couple of hours, notwithstanding his cautious advance, for he knew not at what moment he might run upon a sentinel.

The timber was scattering, and there was little, if any, underbrush.

There were willows, quaking-aspen and cottonwoods scattered here and there, and the scout glided among them like a ghost.

At last he got near enough to see the horses still feeding out in the valley, and he was glad to find that, whoever their riders were, they had not gone away.

To find the camp was the next thing, and to do this he must be most cautious, for they were evidently too fearful of discovery to light camp-fires, whether they were the fugitive outlaws or Indians.

Going slowly along through the timber, he suddenly touched something with his foot, and to his amazement it was a human form.

Buffalo Bill had no time to consider, to fly, or to draw a weapon before he found himself suddenly in the grasp of one whose strength his first clutch revealed.

Though taken by surprise, Buffalo Bill was not unnerved, and at once his grasp was on his foe.

It was dark there in the timber, neither being able to see the other, and yet it was to be a deadly struggle, for the one he had stumbled upon sought to grip his throat, at the same time striving to draw his knife and use it.

This was what the scout must prevent to save his life, and so he held to the hand that grasped the knife, and his other grip was upon the throat of his enemy, who, powerful as he was, felt that he had met his match.

Thus the struggle continued, the two giants fighting for life, uttering no word, neither daring to use his revolver if he was able to do so, but both striving for the knife that would kill in silence.

Their hard breathing, the sound of their feet upon the ground alone were heard as they fought and fought on.

It was a magnificent battle there in midnight darkness between two giants in strength, two men of nerve, neither knowing who it was he sought to kill, yet striving to take the other's life.

At last, Buffalo Bill loosened his grip upon the throat for just an instant to get a firmer grasp, and from the lips of his foe came a hoarse, smothered oath.

"You are a white man at least, in spite of your Indian rig," panted the scout; and with a mighty effort he hurled his foe over his head to the ground, and in such a way as to throw him upon his other arm and pinion it under him.

Then, wrenching the knife from his grasp he drove the point hard against his side, so that his enemy could just feel it prick him and said in a hoarse whisper:

"Surrender, or I drive the knife to the hilt in your heart."

"I caves, pard, you wins ther game," was the panting response of the conquered man.

But Buffalo Bill took no chances, so ordered him to lay his hand upon the ground by his side.

This he did, and kneeling upon it the scout quickly disarmed him and, turning him over, with his black silk scarf bound his hands behind his back securely.

"Now, pard, let us get acquainted with each other," he said in his dry way, still speaking in a very low tone, for he considered his prisoner one of the outlaw guards of the camp.

"Well, who is yer?" was the dogged response.

"Just now the man who has won the game."

"I said that."

"Now who are you?"

"A scout."

"From what command?"

"I'm one o' Buffalo Bill's scouts from Wingate."

"Indeed, and what was your name when you were an honest man?"

"Names don't count."

"Well, see if I cannot place you."

"Who is I?"

"I thought that you might be one of the road-agents who held up the coach to Santa Fe some days ago."

"No, I hain't one of them."

"As I find you in Indian toggery, for I can feel if I do not see you in this Egyptian darkness, I am pretty sure you are just what I want to be."

"What is that?"

"A renegade with the Navahoes, for I was one of the Gold-Hunter Outlaws of the Colorado, and making my escape am going to join the Navahoes."

"Pard, give me yer grip, for I belonged to that same band two year ago, but am now a white Injun, a-hopin' ter be promoted to chief some day; but, yer has ter untie my hands ter shake with yer," said the man eagerly.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RED SCALP, THE RENEGADE.

"I'll go you," said Buffalo Bill, when the man asked to be released from his bonds, and he added:

"One of my hands is so cramped by our tussle that I can hardly use it, but I'll see about undoing that knot."

Pretending that he was trying to untie it, Buffalo Bill went on talking with the man to get all the information out of him that he could.

"I say, pard, is it far to the Navaho village, for I am making that way, and I tell you I am awful glad I found you."

"If my throat hadn't such a chokin' I'd reciprocate, pard, them sentiments o' yours; but, it ain't over twenty mile to where the head village of Bad Buffalo be, with a few scattering tepees between."

"What are you doing so far from the village and alone, how tight this knot is, for you see the perspiration I got into in

our row wet the silk, and I tied it hard, not knowing I was finding a friend in you."

"Yer see I am off on a leetle job o' my own, and I guess I better be satisfied with half a loaf and take you inter ther game as partner."

"I'm yer huckleberry; but, what's yer game and how much ter chip in?" and Buffalo Bill dropped into border dialect, still struggling with the hard knot in the silk bonds, or pretending to.

"It's just this, thet thar be some forty head o' fine horses near here, right out yonder in the valley feedin', and a dozen or more of 'em are saddled an' bridled or has packs."

"Where is the camp?" asked Buffalo Bill with an imprecation upon the knot.

"There hain't no camp."

"No camp! Why, where are the riders?"

"That's just it, ther hain't none."

"What became of them?"

"I'll tell yer that ther came a party o' whites up this trail, and I seen 'em drop off the'r horses one by one, take a few traps on the'r shoulders, and start afoot toward ther Navaho village."

"Says I to myself thar is su'thin' in thet, and I watches and sees their horses, and they had many extra ones, continue on up the trail, only a young Injun driving them."

"Is that so?"

"Sure as Gospel; but, hain't yer got that blamed knot untied?"

"It won't take me much longer to finish my work, pard; but what about the horses?"

"I were too far back to overtake 'em, and I set to trackin' ther riders, and I met an Injun who said they had the Snow and Blood Arrow with them and was going to Bad Buffalo ther chief ter git horses ter take 'em on to whar they hed a relay of horses waitin' for 'em, and then they was goin' into ther Colorado Canyon country, I guesses ter hunt fer gold, at least that is what his father, Bending Bow, told him, for he had met the party."

"I see, and these are the horses that belonged to them?"

"Yes, they sent 'em on ter throw them off ther trail thet might be following them."

"But the Indian is in charge of them alone?"

"No, he lighted out for the village, I guesses, leavin' them jist as they is, grazin' now out yonder in the valley."

"But it struck me I might capter ther outfit, run 'em to my tepee and make a big deal in horseflesh, so I crossed here arter them, laid down ter sleep until mornin' and you stumbles over me."

"Now, as we is ter be pards I lets you inter ther deal, for you can say you picked 'em up and so get old Bad Buffalo to let you keep 'em by giving him a couple—see?"

"Yes, pard, I see, and more, I will take the horses; but I cannot untie you and I'll tell you why."

The scout felt the start the man gave, fearing that he had made a mistake in giving his confidence in the dark.

"What's ther matter, pard, for yer kin take yer knife and cut ther bonds."

"No, I prefer to leave them as they are, for I am going to tell you a secret."

"What be it?"

"You have confessed yourself a renegade, but have not given me your name."

"Ther Injuns call me Red Scalp, for my hair is about the next reddest thing ter blood that I knows."

"Well, Mr. Red Scalp, the Renegade, allow me to introduce myself as Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts of this military district—see?"

The man groaned, but replied in a voice that trembled:

"I hears if I don't see."

"Yer has tuk me in, out-fit me, out-played me and out-fooled me, so I guesses my throat won't git well o' ther chokin' yer give it afore I'll be puttin' on a rope cravat."

"The rope cravat is as certain as death, pard, unless you sing to my music," sternly said the scout.

"What's the tune, pard?" was the grim query.

"The Rogue's March," deeply said the scout.

"Sing it, and I'll chip in."

"I am here on the trail of those who left those horses out in the valley yonder, and I

have enough soldiers and scouts with me to back me up."

"Oh, Lord!"

"I want those horses and will corral them when I can do so, but I need a guide to take us around the Indian country so that we will run upon no villages or bands of redskins, and you are just the man to do it."

"I know how."

"Well, your life will depend upon how you do your work, for if you serve me faithfully, you shall go free, with a horse and your weapons; but if you lead us into a trap it will be with a rope around your neck, and then the tune will be the Dead March for you."

"I'll go yer, pard, on them tarms."

"Untie me and we'll start at once."

"No, I am not in such a hurry as that, and I'll not untie you, but secure you more firmly, for, as I can do nothing now with you on my hands, we'll just camp here until morning and go to sleep."

"I hain't sleepy."

"I am, and I'll see that you are quiet while I sleep," and Buffalo Bill having secured his prisoner beyond all chance of escape, lay down on the fine straw to get what rest he could until morning.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A RED-SKIN PRISONER.

WHEN Surgeon Powell went away to reconnoiter, and see if he could find the chief of scouts, he took the way which he thought that Buffalo Bill had most likely gone.

He knew that he must be cautious, for the scout, not expecting him, would be quick to protect himself if in the darkness he felt that he was a foe.

Down the slope he went, going slowly, and with eyes and ears on the alert for danger, or for a glimpse of his pard.

He had gotten into the valley, and instead of flanking it as Buffalo Bill had done to reach the timber, he started straight across toward the stream half a mile away.

It was not long before he came in sight of objects moving ahead.

He halted at once and looked closely through his field-glass.

"They are the horses we saw and from the way they are moving I believe some one is driving them."

He laid down on the ground and with his glass to his eyes watched closely for a few moments.

It was dark but the glass aided his vision and he saw a form following the horses.

"They expect to start and the guard is driving them into camp," muttered the Surgeon Scout.

After a moment he added:

"Can it be Cody, for the man is driving them away from the timber, and he seems not to wish to make any noise whatever, for he does not utter a word."

As he continued to look he became more and more convinced that it was Buffalo Bill, yet he was too cautious to make any sign of his presence until he was certain.

Here and there in the low land was a boulder, and sitting down on the ground he knew that he might readily be supposed to be one of these rocks, so he quietly held his position.

The one who was driving the horses seemed to have much trouble in making them obey him, yet he was all patience and as silent as a ghost.

At last as he got them started one horse got away from the herd and came trotting toward where the Surgeon Scout was crouching.

The driver whoever he was quietly left the others to try and flank him, and the animal came within a few feet of the Surgeon Scout, halted, gave a low snort and started off at a trot.

The driver came flying along then on foot to head him off, started to turn out of the way of the supposed rock, which suddenly straightened up and a pair of iron arms were thrown around him with irresistible force.

A cry of alarm broke from the lips of the man thus caught, in spite of his stoical nature, for he was surprised and awed together at finding a rock, as he had believed it, turn into a human being, and more, a foe, for the one whom Doctor Powell found in his grasp was an Indian.

If shocked for an instant into passivity it was only for an instant, and then the red-skin began to struggle for escape and mastery.

But the moment of hesitation had given Surgeon Powell a better grip, and a man of phenomenal strength, lightning-like quickness and indomitable pluck, he had acted quickly and well.

Forcing the red-skin backward he bent him over until he wrung even from the lips of a race who never cry out with pain a groan of agony.

The red-skin was large of stature, powerfully built and very active, and yet he found that where the braves who knew his strength feared to suffer a test of it, he had met one whom he could not master.

Bending him backward by sheer force, Frank Powell dropped on one knee, forced the Indian over it, and with one arm around his neck began to bend him as he would a bow, and thus wrung the groan of pain from his lips.

"You are Navaho?" said Frank Powell, speaking in the Indian tongue.

"Me Navaho," was the answer in English.

"Submit, or I will kill you."

"Navaho die."

"You will die rather than yield?"

"Bending Bow great warrior, no beg—kill him."

"I'll do nothing of the kind my brave fellow, but I'll have to use you roughly to capture you alive."

Then in the Navaho tongue he added:

"The Bending Bow can go free when I am out of danger, if he will submit now."

"Me Navaho—die now," was the brave response of the Indian warrior.

"You will not die, my plucky fellow, though it will be hard work I suppose to tie you, but fortunately I brought my lariat with me," and speaking rather to himself than the Indian, Frank Powell, by a quick movement pinioned the arms of the Bending Bow with his lasso coil, and, after a severe struggle, for he fought like a tiger, he was bound hands and feet.

"The Bending Bow should have obeyed me without a struggle."

"Me Navaho," was all the Indian would reply.

"Oh I know you are a brave people; but I did not wish to harm you, and I wanted to get some information from you, when I was willing to let you go free after my friends and myself were out of danger."

The Navaho only shook his head in silence.

"What are you doing with those horses?" asked Surgeon Powell.

The Indian hesitated a moment and replied:

"Pale-face let ponies go, Bending Bow come to get them."

"Ah! the pale-faces let them go did they?"

Bending Bow nodded.

"Where are the pale-faces?"

The Indian made no reply and so Surgeon Powell said:

"All right, if the pale-faces let the horses go, and you came after them, I guess you are alone, from the way you acted in driving the animals, so I'll just hold you as prisoner and take you back to camp."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A NIGHT OF SURPRISES.

THE taking of the Indian back to where he had left the command was not such an easy task, as Surgeon Powell very soon discovered.

Bending Bow was in a stubborn mood and would not rise from the ground.

He simply refused to move and lay quietly watching the movements of his captor.

As he found entreaties and threats alike unavailable, Surgeon Powell decided to do the only thing left for him to do, that was, carry him.

He dared not leave him there and go back for help, for he was not sure that others were not about.

Then, too, he would not catch one of the loose horses, not willing to betray the presence of the soldiers near, in case the pale-faces had not deserted the horses as the Indian had said.

If he had deserted them Surgeon Powell's idea was that they had been forced to seek refuge from Indians in some spot where they could not take the horses.

Therefore, as there was nothing to be done for it but shoulder his prisoner he proceeded to do so at once.

The Indian was a heavy weight, and to urge him by torture the surgeon knew was useless, for he would not flinch under pain he well knew.

Arranging his lasso so as to make a kind of harness, he dragged the prisoner upon his back and set out.

Carrying a weight nearly equal to his own was tiresome as well as hard work, and especially over a trackless, uneven country.

Stopping often to rest, the Surgeon Scout, however, stuck to his task and at last arrived upon the ridge half an hour before dawn.

He found the sentinel on duty, and said that the men were sleeping near, while the horses were feeding off of what they could pick up on the sandy soil, for there it was almost barren though in the valley a few miles away very fertile.

As he laid his burden down he asked:

"Guard, has Buffalo Bill come in yet?"

"Not yet, sir."

"That is strange, and I hope no harm has befallen him."

"I hope not, sir."

"The men are camped yonder by that cliff?"

"Yes, sir, it is but three hundred yards from here."

"Is there another guard on duty besides you?"

"Yes, sir, one at the ridge on the other side, sir."

"Lieutenant Ames has retired of course?"

"Well, no, sir, he remained out here for a long while after I came on at midnight, and then he sent me after his horse, and rode away down toward the valley."

"In Heaven's name what did he do that for, my man?" asked Surgeon Powell anxiously.

"I don't know, sir, more than that he said that he was very anxious about Chief Cody and yourself, sir, and went out to look you up."

"I fear he will get into trouble; but here comes daylight, so I'll see that my prisoner is safe and then go out to look up Lieutenant Ames, for, good Indian-fighter that he is, he may run against a snag riding about here in the night."

So saying Surgeon Powell went over to the camp beneath the shadow of the cliff, carrying his prisoner.

The sergeant had just left his blankets, and the Surgeon Scout called to him:

"Here is game for you, sergeant."

"A fine fat deer, I hopes, sir."

"No, a red bird, sergeant."

"Lord presarve us, sir, but its a red Injun."

"Yes, and I wish you to take care of him."

"Well, well, did yez ever see the loikes o' that?"

"Shall I kill him, sir?"

"No, for had I wished that done I could have killed him instead of taking him prisoner."

"That's so, sir; but it may save killin' him later."

"You see that he does not escape, sergeant, for I will hold you responsible for his safe-keeping when I come to you, for him."

"Now, order my horse for me, and when Lord Mildmay rises, say that I hope to be back to breakfast."

"Lord Mildmay is here, doctor, and at your service," said the nobleman, coming from the dark crevice among the rocks where he had spread his blankets.

"Then perhaps you will ride with me to see if we can find Cody, or Lieutenant Ames."

"What, is Ames gone too?"

"Yes, he left, the guard told me, to look up Cody and myself, and I have fears of trouble for him."

"Do you see my Indian here?"

"You are right, it is an Indian."

"Where did you get him?"

"Caught him last night by accident, and having him we must hold him now until we get out of this country."

"You are right; but I will go with you with pleasure, for I just saddled and bridled my horse."

The sergeant now came up leading Surgeon Powell's horse, and turning the red-skin prisoner over to him, Doctor Powell rode away accompanied by Lord Mildmay.

They had gone but a short distance when by the early light of dawn they saw some one approaching, and Surgeon Powell said quickly:

"There are two of them, and one is Cody, but who is the other?"

"This is a night of surprises, surely, Lord Mildmay."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LIEUTENANT AMES AS A SCOUT.

LIEUTENANT AMES was in an anxious mood, at the long delay of Buffalo Bill in returning, and the fact that the Surgeon Scout, who had gone to look after him, had also not returned.

The more he thought it over the more anxious he became.

Aware that there were no two men alive better able to take care of themselves than Buffalo Bill and Doctor Frank Powell, he yet feared that the outlaws encamped as he supposed, in the timber along the stream, aware of being hotly pursued, had arranged an ambush into which both men had fallen with perhaps loss of life, it might be as prisoners.

He was too brave a man to ask another to do what he would not himself dare, though, as commander of the expedition he was not called upon to do so, and he therefore determined to go alone to see just what the situation was.

He mounted his horse therefore, and, with a word to the guard, rode down toward the valley.

He had scouted often, fought Indians, and was an acknowledged authority, young as he was, in red-skin warfare, so that he was not going out alone and by night as a tenderfoot, to look up two scouts with world-wide reputation.

Going at a slow walk he flanked for the stream just as Buffalo Bill had done, his glass revealing the position of the horses, and the supposed situation of the camp of the outlaws.

He was cautious, as all really brave men are, and made a long flank movement, arriving at the stream just where the valley ended and ran in among lofty cliffs and heavy fine timber.

Having reached the stream he halted to consider the best manner of going along the fringe of timber up to where the camp was, as he believed, located.

At last he decided that his plan would be to strike out into the valley, reach the horses of the outlaws, and walking by the side of the animal he was riding, to work in and find where the guards were stationed and then just where the camp was located.

Going out into the valley, just out of eyesight range from the timber along the stream, he rode on up to a position near the outlaws' horses, all of which were quietly feeding now.

By leaving the timber he had failed to come upon Buffalo Bill hiding there with his prisoner near the stream, and he reached the horses just after Surgeon Powell, carrying his captive upon his back, had gone by the nearest way to the spot where the soldiers were camped on the ridge.

Thus it was that the brave officer missed the two scouts.

When he drew near enough to the horses to discover them in a mass he dismounted and walked by the side of the well-trained animal he rode, and which he was as fond of as though it was his sweetheart.

He moved the horse forward, as an animal might advance when feeding, and gradually edged up until he got up to the first one of the herd.

Then he breathed more freely, for that much of his purpose was accomplished.

Thus he moved about among the herd, going from horse to horse, noting those that were saddled, those that carried pack-saddles, and the number that had only the stake-ropes about their necks.

The horses gazed at him curiously, one or

two gave a short of alarm, and several trotted away from him.

But he saw no guard and managed to get to each one of the herd and have a look at him.

Counting the number, he found there were just forty-three, and determined to see where the guard could be he drove them from one spot to another and at last over to the timber.

Once in the timber they moved down it to where there was a deer ford and went in and drank.

Still he saw no sign of a guard, not the vestige of a camp or any human being near.

It almost awed him to see how thoroughly the place seemed deserted save by the horses.

Where were the riders of those animals? he wondered.

What had become of Buffalo Bill and Frank Powell? he asked himself again and again.

Surely such experts as they were must have found the animals as he had, and discovered that they had no riders, or the riders were in ambush, playing some deep game and the two scouts had fallen into the trap.

"I am in great luck not to have fallen into it myself; but I am not out of the woods yet by any means—ah! the thought now comes to me that the outlaws were massacred by Indians, yet, if so, why did the red-skins allow these horses to escape them, for a horse is a Navaho's idol."

"Under all the circumstances I think I had better return to the camp, and see if Buffalo Bill and Powell have returned."

He was about to ride out of the timber when he beheld a horse with a rider coming directly toward him, and in an instant he had leveled his glass upon him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LIEUTENANT'S LASSO.

THE glass of Lieutenant Ames revealed certainly a horse with a rider.

He was then about two hundred yards away, and coming directly toward the spot where he stood.

The horses, the glass revealed, were feeding on up the valley, just in the edge of the timber, and the nearest one was but a few rods away.

The distinctness with which he now beheld the horseman and the herd of animals, suddenly revealed to the lieutenant that the day was dawning.

He was slightly startled at this, for he had meant to get away while darkness yet lingered, and now he knew it would be but a short while before it would be light enough to see at a long distance.

But he must first look to this horseman, and a close scrutiny through his glass showed him that it was an Indian, and more, a chief.

His magnificent war-bonnet of eagle-feathers was visible, and he came along like one who, if alone, had not the slightest dread of danger.

A horse in the rear of the herd was hurried on to catch up with the others, and Lieutenant Ames distinctly heard the driving call in the Navaho tongue.

"I am in for it; but I only hope he is alone," said the lieutenant.

"It will be strange if he, a chief, is alone, however."

"But I could drop him with my rifle where he is,* only it would not do to fire a shot."

"But I dare not fire, so must— Ah! my lasso!"

The exclamation was one of delight, as the officer let his hand fall upon a splendid lasso that hung from his saddle-horn, and which he was an expert in the use of, as he was also with rifle, revolver and sword, for Uncle Sam trains his Boys in Blue magnificently.

He unslung the coil, got it ready, moved his horse more into the shadow of the timber, and made a whirl of the lasso around his head, to see that it would not catch in any limb.

His horse seemed to appreciate the situation, and braced himself for it, for his eyes were also upon the coming Indian.

* Most of the army officers on a campaign carry their repeating rifles.

—THE AUTHOR.

The light now revealed a deer trail into the timber and to the stream, and this it was that the Indian was following.

It led directly into the timber not ten feet from where the lieutenant sat upon his horse, silent, determined, watchful, prepared for a death-struggle should it come to that by his missing his aim with the lasso.

It was growing lighter and lighter out upon the valley plain, but the East was behind the officer, so that the timber hid the brightening skies and there it was all densely dark yet.

Nearer and nearer drew the Indian, the reflection of the Eastern horizon revealing him now distinctly, and Lieutenant Ames saw that he was a chief of the highest rank, for his own costume and the trappings of his horse revealed this.

Nearer and nearer he drew to the menacing danger, and cool and determined Lieutenant Ames stood ready.

Suddenly there was a swish as the lariat swept around the head, a strong throw, a quick twang, as the Indian's horse made a quick spring of fright, and the chief, dragged from his saddle, fell with a heavy thud upon the ground.

Springing from his saddle and leaving his horse to keep the lasso taut,* Lieutenant Ames advanced with a few bounds to the side of his fallen victim.

He saw that the chief was partially stunned by his hard fall, for he was unable to rise, and calling to his horse to advance a few paces, he quickly passed the slack of the lasso around the Indian, pinioning his arms to his side, so as to render him utterly helpless.

Still advancing slowly, as his master needed the slack of the lasso, the horse came to a halt only when the Indian was securely bound, though his feet were left free.

"Hold him, Black Bird, until I catch his horse," said the lieutenant, and hold him the horse did, for the moment the chief sought to rise, he would back off rapidly and draw him down again.

The Indian pony, a fine, snow-white animal, seemed as dazed by surprise as was his master and stood gazing at the officer without an effort to escape.

Seizing him by the bridle-rein Lieutenant Ames led him quickly back into the woods, for it was getting too light upon the valley to just suit him, and fastening the animal there he returned to the chief to take him also into the darkness of the timber.

The chief arose with the aid of the lieutenant, and maintaining his dignity walked into the timber.

"Does the chief speak English?" asked the lieutenant politely.

The Indian gravely shook his head.

"I am sorry, for I wished to talk with you; but you can understand what I want. I guess," and the lieutenant made a sign for him to mount his horse.

With the same dignity as before he obeyed, and taking his stake-rope in hand the officer led the pony after him, keeping still within the timber line and watching closely all ahead of him, for he still could not believe that the chief was alone, but had his warriors not far away from there.

CHAPTER XL.

A BAD BUFFALO.

LIEUTENANT Ames was certainly bothered as to the situation in which he found himself.

He had started out to find Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Frank Powell, had run upon the herd of horses supposed to belong to the fugitive outlaws, discovered no guard, no camp, had not passed either of those he was in search of and just as dawn came to make his danger more imminent, right into his clothes had ridden an Indian chief and become his captive.

Who those horses belonged to he could not tell, and where the owners were he had not the slightest idea.

What had become of Buffalo Bill or Lieutenant Ames was a puzzle which he had to acknowledge he could not solve.

Where the warriors of the old chief were he also could not tell, and just then alone

* Trained horses will keep a lasso taut while their riders dismount to secure their game.—THE AUTHOR.

with his prisoner, he was not anxious to find out.

His greatest longing was to get back to his command in safety with his captive, who, as the dawn brightened, he discovered was no ordinary chief, for he wore necklaces of bear-claws, one of human finger-joints and had the feathers that denoted long and distinguished services, while at his belt hung a string of scalps, from the silken tresses of a child to the iron-gray hair of some unfortunate settler.

The old chief, for his hair was iron-gray, though he still looked in the prime of life, had bands of beaten-out silver and gold upon his arms and ankles, his fingers were full of rings, there being several with precious stones in them, without doubt stripped from the hands of some fair woman, and his buckskin shirt, leggings and moccasins were embroidered with colored porcupine-quills and beads, while his *serape* was of Mexican manufacture and a very handsome one.

If he did not speak English, he carried a brace of handsome American revolvers and a bowie, a fine rifle was hung to his saddle-horn on one side while a lariat was on the other, and both saddle and bridle were military, bearing the rank of some brave major of the army who had fallen, perhaps, by the chief's hand.

Lieutenant Ames took in thoroughly the chief, his make-up and general appearance, even to his war-paint, which was most gorgeous, making him appear as radiant as a rainbow.

"He is the head devil of some tribe, that is certain, and if I can only get him to camp without encountering some of his imps, I will be content, and do a month's penance for my sins," muttered the lieutenant, and, after awhile he added:

"If his imps do turn up I'll use him as a foil, and see how that trump card will win."

By this time the lieutenant and his captive had reached the end of the timber, where the stream ran in among the rocks.

It was broad daylight now, and he reconnoitered carefully before leaving the timber, having to go out into a barren plain until he reached the ridge, now about a mile distant.

Just as he left the timber he quickly came to a halt, for his eyes fell upon two men standing under the shadows of the rocks several hundred yards distant.

It was too late to draw back, to prevent being seen, for he saw that he was discovered, so he coolly held his ground and raising his glass to his eye dropped it quickly and rode forward once more without any seeming dread of meeting a foe, for he had recognized Buffalo Bill.

Who the other was he had no idea.

Quickening his pace Lieutenant Ames soon came within hailing distance and he called out:

"Ho, Cody, you gave me a scare I can tell you; but I am glad to see you."

"We are even then, lieutenant, for I was out in the valley, saw you moving among the trees and ran along that water wash to find shelter near."

"Then, when you came out of the timber I recognized the uniform, and my glass told me that it was you; but you have made a grand capture, I see, for that is Bad Buffalo the head chief of five villages."

"Indeed! I am in luck, for I have heard of the old sinner often and have fought him several times, yes, and he gave us a good whipping once, so I am even now; but you seem also to have been making acquaintances, Bill?" and Lieutenant Ames looked at the prisoner whom Buffalo Bill had with him.

"Yes, he is known as Red Scalp, and is a renegade, for you see that he and the old chief know each other."

"But I thought you were in camp, lieutenant, and I wish to report my long delay from having had a hard fight with my prisoner here, and then, not sure that he was telling all the truth, I laid by until nearly dawn, when I started on my return to join you."

"And Powell becoming anxious went out in search of you, Cody, while I, as he did not return at midnight, set out to see if I could find either of you."

"And you have not seen Surgeon Powell, sir?"

"No, but—there he comes now, and Lord Mildmay with him," and the lieutenant pointed to where the Surgeon Scout and the Englishman were coming down the ridge toward them.

CHAPTER XL.

THE MEETING.

WHEN Buffalo Bill and his prisoner were seen by Surgeon Powell and Lord Mildmay they were crossing the valley toward the ridge, having shortly before come out of the timber.

After going some distance a rise in the valley hid them from Lieutenant Ames as he passed opposite to them, and holding on toward the cliffs as he did, the keen eyes of Buffalo Bill discovered the officer and his prisoner riding along through the timber.

Not able to discern who they were he supposed that some of the outlaws were trying to flank him by watching the cliffs and cutting off from the ridge beyond where the troops were, so he ran with all speed, pressing the prisoner along with him, to reach the rocks where he could stand at bay and the firing he knew would bring his comrades to his aid.

But, as he reached the shelter of the rocks he saw the blue uniform and his glass told him who it was as the lieutenant rode out of the timber.

"How did he get there?" muttered Buffalo Bill, as he stood out in fair view awaiting for the officer to come up.

"And if he has not caught a chief, I'll eat dog at the next Indian feast I am invited to," he added.

"He's got the King Bee of the hive, pard, for it's old Bad Buffalo himself, an Injun as thought he had a charmed life, and is more fond of scalps than ther devil is o' sinners."

"How on top o' this 'arth did he git ther chief, and what were old Bad Buffalo doin' out here alone, I wonder?"

"Is he alone?" asked Buffalo Bill, sweeping the valley and timber with his glass.

"I guess so, and I believe I knows why."

"What is it?"

"Waal, yer see Bad Buffalo loves horse-flesh as much as he do his papposes, and he jist concluded he'd light out here all alone and take these in afore his young braves found 'em."

"Yas, he put them folks through all right, and about charged them horses for his kindness, so he was about on ther same errand as fetched me here, ter git ther horse-flesh."

"Well, the lieutenant has trumped his little game," and Buffalo Bill now turned to greet the officer and his prisoner as they rode up.

In the mean while Surgeon Powell and Lord Mildmay had seen, from their higher position on the ridge, Buffalo Bill and his prisoner running for the rocks, but, a jutting point of the cliff concealed Lieutenant Ames from them as he left the timber.

Riding around the point of rocks, to see what had caused the scout and the one with him to run thus rapidly, Surgeon Powell half raised his rifle as he beheld two horsemen, one of whom, the chief, he recognized as a red skin.

But a second glance showed him Lieutenant Ames, Buffalo Bill and the renegade, all grouped together.

"Now what have Cody and Ames been up to?" he said, as he started forward at a gallop, Lord Mildmay by his side.

They soon dashed up and as they drew rein were greeted with a hearty welcome by Ames and Cody, while Chief Bad Buffalo and the renegade looked anything but in a happy mood, the white man having an anxious expression as though he was not sure that Buffalo Bill's pledge would protect him.

"Well, Bill, what have you found?" cried Frank Powell.

"Permit me to introduce him as Red Scalp, the Renegade, a white man living with the Navahoes and whom I have made a bargain with, for his life, to conduct us across to the Colorado River, for that is the way our trail leads now."

"You have made some discovery then, Cody?" said Lieutenant Ames.

"Yes, sir, and which I had not time to tell you, but will now."

"It is no more than that the outlaws left the trail on foot, many miles back, sending their horses on here under an Indian lad, who then let them loose, saddled and bridled as some were, of course to give the idea that they had been forced to leave their animals and take to the hills to escape the Indians, or had been massacred."

"But they were not?"

"Oh, no, sir, they went to this old ally of theirs, Bad Buffalo, whom you have captured, and he sent them on through his country toward the Colorado, lending them horses to ride until they came to where they had a relay of fresh horses."

"This is indeed news, Cody; but did you hear it from that renegade?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you believe him?"

"I would not, sir, under oath, had he given it to me, with any knowledge of who I was, but we had had a hard fight—just look at me, please, for I am a wreck—and when I subdued him, in the darkness I led him to believe that I was an outlaw myself, one of the Gold-Hunter gang, and so he told me all, and chipped in with me as half-partner, to help him run in the outlaws' horses yonder."

"Then I introduced myself to him as I really am, and for his life he agrees to guide us where we wish to go; but you, lieutenant, have made the grandest capture, as, with Bad Buffalo as a hostage, I believe we can keep all the Navahoes at bay—what do you say, old man?"

The chief shook his head and Buffalo Bill said:

"Don't play the no-speak-English racket, old man, for I met you in a council once, and you speak the language like a school-teacher," and all laughed at the hideous face the chief made, for it showed that he understood every word that was uttered, while Lord Mildmay remarked:

"There is another one in camp, Ames, for Surgeon Powell brought a prisoner in too."

"What! did all three of us make a haul?" cried Lieutenant Ames, with surprise.

"Yes, I caught a warrior who was also after those horses, and he is a game one, too, for he would rather die than give his people away; but, lieutenant, had I not better ride back and bring the men up, for there is fine water, wood and grass yonder for a camp?"

"I will be obliged if you will, for where they are, you know it is a dry camp, Powell."

"When we have had some breakfast, and corraled the outlaw horses yonder, we can decide what is best to be done," responded Lieutenant Ames.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

SURGEON POWELL rode rapidly back to bring the men on to the valley, for he was anxious to get the horses where they could get a feed of rich grass.

That on the ridge had not been half a meal and there was no water there, though the halt had given them a rest.

He soon had the command mounted and on the march, and seeing that those he had left had gone toward the timber he led the troops rapidly on to overtake them.

A good camping-ground had already been selected by Buffalo Bill, and not daring to build fires, for fear the smoke would be seen from the Navaho villages some twenty miles away, they had a cold breakfast.

But there were no grumblers and the four scouts went out at once to drive in the horses of the outlaws.

This was done, and the animals were staked out with their own; those that were saddled, with bridles hanging upon the horns of the saddles, were carefully looked over by Buffalo Bill and the others.

To give color to the idea that they had been forced, from some unexplained cause, to desert their animals, the outlaws had left a number of things in the pack-saddles, and they came in very acceptably to the finders.

As they looked over the animals and their saddles Buffalo Bill called out:

"Do you recognize this horse and his outfit, lieutenant?"

"I most certainly do, Bill."

"It is the horse of Golden Hair."

"Yes, sir."

"That proves conclusively that he is a prisoner also with De Villers and the other three passengers who were taken from the coach," said Lord Mildmay.

"It proves that he was along, but I cannot rid myself from the belief that he is not a prisoner, but a leader in the kidnapping."

"Why should he be? for he did not know De Villers."

"It may be, sir, and yet he may have been a tool for those who did," and turning to the renegade who was near, Buffalo Bill continued:

"See here, Red Scalp, was there any prisoners among the outlaws?"

"There was one."

"Only one?"

"That was all I seen."

"What kind of a looking man was he?"

"A tall man as far as I could see, with long light brown hair and beard."

"That was De Villers," said Lord Mildmay quickly.

"Yes, without doubt; but you saw no other prisoner?"

"None."

"Did you not tell me last night there was a young man with long golden hair along?"

"Yes, Golden Hair, the Medicine Squaw."

"A squaw?"

"Yes, a white woman."

"Dressed as a man?"

"Yes, and more dangerous than one, you bet."

"What do you know of her?"

"Next to nothing, only that the Indians call her Golden Hair, the Medicine Squaw, and are friendly to her, the old chief particularly."

"You know nothing else about her?"

"Nothing."

"Can you not get some information from old Bad Buffalo about her?"

"No, fer yer said as how I was goin' ter save my neck by bein' yer guide, and the old chief heard it, for he speaks English same as I do."

"He turned on me at once and forever, and he and Bending Bow has been tryin' ter kill me with looks, so yer see it hain't goin' ter be healthy fer me ter linger here ef yer does set me free."

"Then, too, they'd die both of 'em, 'fore they'd say a word ter benefit yer, as they thought yer wanted ter know."

"All right, we'll go ahead and find the Medicine Squaw and then we will know all about her we wish, and her companions too," said Buffalo Bill, and he walked away with Lieutenant Ames, Surgeon Powell and Lord Mildmay for a council of war.

"Well, Surgeon Powell, what have you to propose to extricate us from our present position?" asked Lieutenant Ames, turning to Frank Powell.

"I think, Ames, that you have already decided upon a plan, and I am willing to wager high that it is a good one, though I only heard you give a hint of your intention, so let us know your views, and we will come in later," answered the Surgeon Scout.

"No, I have formed no plan of action, other than having the big chief of the Navahoes in our power, it looks as though with such a hostage we can hold the red-skins at bay, should they crowd us, by threatening to end his life should they do so."

"Then, too, we have Bending Bow, a sub-chief as I believe your prisoner is, Powell, and one who the renegade says is most influential among his people."

"Then there is the renegade himself, who has influence among them, and they do not know that he has turned traitor to them to save his life, so that with three such strong points in our favor I believe we can still stick to our trail through the Indian country and push those outlaws to their hiding-place."

"That is about all I have decided upon, so what are your views?"

"I agree with you perfectly, for we hold the power in our hands it seems, to make terms if the Indians crowd us."

"And you, Cody, what have you to say?" asked Lieutenant Ames.

"I also agree with you, sir, but I believe

in strategy and cunning as well, for we have the cards in our hands to play a great game, as well as holding trumps in our prisoners."

"What are the other cards, as you call them, Cody?"

"As I understand it, only these three prisoners we have knew that the outlaws had played a deep game by deserting their horses, and they came, each one of them alone, to get those animals."

Now these three men, in appearance, add to our number, and the chief's horse gives us with the forty-three we find the outlaws have, just forty-four animals added to our own."

"Yes, Cody," said Lieutenant Ames, with the rest feeling sure that Buffalo Bill had already devised some clever plan to act upon.

"We have, with our pack-animals, thirty-three animals, and add these to the forty-four we got to-day and you see we will have quite a troop of nearly eighty horses."

"But if each one only had a man on his back, Bill," said the lieutenant.

"We must put a man on all, sir, we do not reserve for pack-animals."

"Where will we get the men, Cody?"

"Make them, sir," was the surprising response and every one laughed, while Surgeon Powell said:

"I see your plan, Bill; we must make dummies."

"Ah! then that is it, and we can do it, and you shall be the boss tailor, Cody, in the work," and Lieutenant Ames added thoughtfully:

"Yes, I believe we can all of us furnish some garment to go to make up dummy comrades, and I will find out just what wardrobe can be gathered," and the whole force was called together for the purpose of carrying out Buffalo Bill's clever device to add to the numbers they had.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DEAD-HEAD DRAGOONS.

WHEN called upon by Lieutenant Ames to fetch out all they could spare in the way of wearing apparel each man set to work to do his best.

Fortunately all of the soldiers had their overcoats along, and a foraging cap as well, and this made, as Frank Powell said: "fifteen good men and true."

The scouts had enough extra clothing along to furnish half a dozen "dummies," and from the pack of Lord Mildmay a supply for even more was added.

Then blankets were manufactured into suits, and with leaves to stuff them with, and sticks to serve as guns, when all were mounted upon bogus saddles, Lieutenant Ames remarked as he gazed at the outfit:

"Well, I defy any Indian to tell that those forty dummies are not real men at the distance of a hundred yards."

"I have a force of sixty odd men now, and the twenty-two live men must do the circulating about for the dead-heads."

"I tell you, Cody, that is a great head of yours, and if the Indians discover us they will be very slow in attacking what they believe so large a force, armed with the most improved weapons."

"What say you, Lord Mildmay?"

"You Americans can outwit any race on earth, for who would have originated such a plan and carried it out but men of this country," responded Lord Mildmay, and he greatly enjoyed a sight at what Lieutenant Ames called his "Dead-Head Dragoons."

As the horses needed a rest and food, and they could obtain both there, with the stream near for water, it was decided to remain there until the following morning.

When night came on they could build fires under the bluff of the stream and cook a hot supper and enough food to last them for rations for a couple of days.

The soldiers were set to cutting grass with their sabers, so that enough could be carried along to give the horses a few refreshing mouthfuls in crossing the barren plains which they would find in flanking the Navaho country.

The four scouts were posted during the day to watch for any Indian that might be coming that way, though Red Scalp the Renegade, as though anxious to make himself

"solid" with his captors, said that no Navaho came into that part of the country, as the hunting was poor and there was really nothing to call them there.

Still the scouts kept on patrol duty all day, and at night soldiers went on guard, while the camp selected was an easy one to defend in case of attack.

All enjoyed the hot supper that was cooked for them, and at an early hour the camp retired to rest.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the night to disturb them, and bright and early the Dead-Head Dragoons were "mounted," and when all was in readiness, with a soldier at either side of every half-dozen dummies, the order was given to move, and it was seen that the plan of Buffalo Bill worked like a charm.

The horses of the outlaws had enjoyed a complete rest of nearly forty hours, with plenty of grass and fresh water at will, and the animals of the troop had had two nights and a day off duty, so that all were ready for the trail once more.

"If we have lost a day and night, the rest will do men and horses good, and I do not believe now that there is any hurry to overtake the outlaws, as long as we can track them to their retreat on the Colorado," Surgeon Powell remarked.

"Yes, it's money to marbles that they believe we can never trail them, and they have gone into an unknown country to remain quiet until the noise blows over, and that they wish us to believe the Indians have massacred them all, Captain De Villers included."

"I tell you, gentlemen, to me it looks very like the work of the Gold-Hunter Outlaws, and if some of that gang are not with the outlaws, I will be very much surprised, for you remember our old scouting friend, Haphazard Harry, who was your guide in before, Lord Mildmay, said that there were two of the gang not found at the retreat when we wiped them out."

"Yes, Cody, they were two of as bad men as I would wish to meet, Mexican Joe and Texas Kit they called themselves, and Old Harry told me that they were both educated men, one of them having been a Mexican officer of rank, and known as Don Jose."

"What did you think of them, Lord Mildmay?" asked Lieutenant Ames.

"I found them splendid plainmen, thorough in their work, obliging, courteous, and really they were men of education and had been reared in refinement I am very sure, yet they were two most black-hearted villains, as I afterward found, and I was very sorry indeed we did not kill or capture them at the retreat."

"Perhaps after all they may be with the outlaws we are following, and the leaders in fact," Surgeon Powell remarked, while Buffalo Bill earnestly rejoined.

The order was then given to march, and the command started out, appearing to a stranger, had one been regarding them at a little distance, like a force of fully eighty men, well-armed and with a dozen pack-horses carrying supplies for a long march.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell again took the lead, with two scouts riding on either side as flankers, and at some distance away.

Lieutenant Ames and Lord Mildmay came next to the leaders, and then in the center of the command rode the prisoners, and their horses were tied together, though Red Scalp was told that his services as guide might be needed at any moment.

And thus making a great show of numbers, the plucky little command set off for a ride through the northern part of the country of the fighting Navahoes.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TRAILING AND TRAILED.

By bending northward, yet with a western tendency, Buffalo Bill thought he would be able to pass through the Navaho country without perhaps coming across any bands of their warriors.

He supposed that at that season of the year most of the braves were off on hunting expeditions to the southward, where game was plentiful, killing their winter supplies, and those who remained would stay close about the villages to guard against any danger to their families.

Red Scalp told the scout that this was also the case, and so the party were guided northward with a leaning to the west, it being Buffalo Bill's hope to go through the country without any molestation from the red-skins.

He wanted to strike for the *Mesa La Vega*, where the supplies from the fort were expected to be sent, and which was north of the Moqui country, a tribe they knew were most hostile to the whites if not their warm friends.

With the most fertile country of the Navahoes lying to the Southwest, and nothing to bring any band, or straggling red-skins up where their trail would run, all hoped to thus flank along and escape any trouble, and yet, should it come, their show of force would protect them from a quick attack, and they had men enough to teach their foes a lesson even as it was, for they could be retreating all the while, and while on the retreat be going just where they hoped to find the outlaws they were trailing.

With determined mien the little band of heroes, who had dared venture in the discharge of duty, where their foes were a hundred to one against them, held on their way.

They were cheerful withal, and much fun was gotten out of the Dead-head Dragoons as they marched along, for every now and then a dummy would reel in his saddle like a drunken man and have to be set to rights again, or another would keel over like a ship in a storm, and some one was sure to make a merry joke of it, Buffalo Bill remarking once, as he rode back and glanced at the "make-ups":

"Lieutenant Ames, if I had such a command as your new recruits I would have every one of them court-martialed for drunkenness on the march."

"The verdict would be justifiable intoxication, Cody; but I see you want your renegade guide?"

"Yes, sir, I am going to have him ride ahead, now, between Surgeon Powell and myself, and if he goes wrong there is going to be one less renegade in this country, and his death will be sudden."

"I hain't goin' wrong, pard, for I'm in it with you now, ter git out o' this country, as them Injuns would kill me sart'in, torture me to death ef I was nabbed by 'em," said Red Scalp, and the answer quickly came:

"See here, pard, don't preach to me, for if you got a chance to lead us into a trap you would do it, and that would far more than square you with the red-skins, who would feel that you pretended to betray them to in the end prove treacherous to us."

"But I don't take a bit of stock in your professions of friendship, and you have not lived this long in this country without having laid aside a snug little amount of gold-dust, which you do not wish to leave here, so I shall watch you, and you will go as guide with a lariat about your neck, so go right if you value your life."

This threat caused the renegade to turn pale, and he saw that the scout was in earnest, for he said:

"I has got a leetle nest o' yaller metal hid away, Pard Cody, and ef yer would trust me ter-night with one o' yer scouts, I'd go and git it, and then yer would hev no cause ter doubt me."

"No, I shall not trust you, and now you go ahead with me."

The scout now bound the man's hands behind his back, untied his feet, which were made fast under his horse, and placed a lasso coil close around his neck.

The other end he made fast to his own saddlehorn, and the slack was coiled and hung over his arm.

Riding forward and joining Surgeon Powell once more, Buffalo Bill said:

"Now, Red Scalp, you ride ahead and keep the length of this lariat in advance."

"If you go wrong, and both Doctor Powell and I will watch you, I shall wheel my horse and dash away, dragging you from your saddle, and you know what that means."

"Go right, act square, though you are forced to do so, and you will be set free when we reach the end of our trail, and I will protect you."

"You have your choice, so go ahead and act as you value or disregard life."

The renegade was impressed by the words and manner of the scout, and he rode the length of the lariat ahead, at once bearing more to the northward.

He had gone but a short distance when he came to a sudden halt, and coming up to him Buffalo Bill saw a large and comparatively fresh trail leading almost as they were then going.

"Red Scalp, is that not the trail of the party of outlaws?"

"It looks it."

"It leads from the direction of your villages?"

"It do fer a fact."

"And bends northward as we are going?"

"Sure."

"It may be thirty-six hours old?"

"About that."

"Is there anything in this direction to carry a band of warriors up this way?"

"I don't know of anything."

"What do you think, Frank?"

"I believe it is the outlaws' trail, and its direction is more northward than ours, and doubtless toward the San Juan River, for by reaching it and following its course good water, grass and wood can be had for camping, while on the way we go now, as I have heard, we pass through only a barren country."

"Then we follow the trail."

"Frank?"

"Yes—but there is more trouble in the rear," and as Surgeon Powell spoke a soldier dashed up to state that a large force of mounted warriors were reported by Little Rebel, as following hot upon their trail.

"Trailing and trailed," muttered Buffalo Bill quietly as he turned to face the new danger.

CHAPTER XLV.

IN DREAD.

It will be well now to follow the fugitive outlaws, who were so sure, with perhaps two exceptions, that they were safe from pursuit.

Having come to the rendezvous where Sun Eyes the Navaho squaw, with the third relay of horses was awaiting them, and sent the ponies of the old chief back to him, the march was taken up then to follow the San Juan down to its mouth, and thence on as near the Colorado river as possible to its crossing.

This crossing was at a point where General Wells, the Mormon commander * had gone over with his forces, where Brigham Young had been at war with the United States, and also it had been held open, as it were, for the Mormons going and coming from the southern country to and from Utah.

One Mormon, it seemed, had dared go and remain in that wild region as ferryman, and he was known as the Lone Ferryman of the Colorado.†

Holding on down to this Mormon Ferry the outlaws meant to cross there, and then seek a retreat in the Kaibab Mountains, then known only to a few Indians, but where the Navaho chief, Red Captain, had been several times on a hunting expedition, and sung its praises so highly to Golden Hair that she determined to make the mountains her hiding-place.

Having passed safely through the Indian country, the spirits of Golden Hair and Tremain arose with anticipated triumph in the end, and Captain De Villers was correspondingly disheartened.

He did not show his feelings however, but kept up his same philosophical way, indifferent and cheery; but he could not understand how Buffalo Bill would dare follow on through the country they had passed through, filled with hostiles, even if he was not thrown off the track by the device of the outlaws in deserting their horses as they had done.

Captain De Villers argued, and very justly, that he felt sure, as soon as he was found to have been made a prisoner, that Lieutenant Ames would follow his captors, guided by Buffalo Bill.

He knew the indomitable pluck of the gallant young Ames, and the persistent energy, nerve and determined-to-win character of Buffalo Bill.

He was aware too that they would be urged on by his brave companion, St. John Mildmay, whom he had seen tried time and again.

Also was he aware of the splendid courage of the picked scouts and soldiers with them, and yet he would muse:

"All told they are hardly over a score, and it would be madness for them to venture on after these outlaws showed they were coming up into this hostile Indian country."

"For Lieutenant Ames to get reinforcements at the fort and come on it would take nearly, if not quite a week, and in that time no trail could be followed and these scamps will have gotten beyond all pursuit."

"Then too, it would be madness to send less than half a thousand men up here, and Colonel Baldwin has not over that force under his command and dare not strip his fort to send them."

"No, I am in for it again, and I can see no help for it but to watch my chances and make a desperate effort to escape, and it is said that Providence helps those who help themselves."

"Still it is a case of live and die, and I don't half like the way these outlaws regard me, for it is about as one would behave toward a dying man."

Thus mused the brave captive of the outlaws, though, whatever he might feel he would not show it by word or look.

Every order given him by his captors he cheerfully obeyed, never grumbled, made no

* General Wells was the commander of the Nauvoo Legion, and in the Mormon War opposed General Albert Sidney Johnson and the American troops.—THE AUTHOR.

† The "Lone Ferryman" was afterward known to be Major John D. Lee, the commander of the Danies, and the instigator of the Mountain Meadow Massacre for which he had to go into hiding to save his life. He was a man of refinement and education, and was afterward tracked down and taken from his home there on the Colorado and shot by the United States troops. He had in that lone spot three wives and their families with him, and the crossing is today called "Lee's Ferry."—THE AUTHOR.

remonstrance, took what was given him to eat and appeared really like one satisfied with his lot in life as a prisoner.

But though Captain De Villers argued against a rescue, and Golden Hair, Tremain and the other three outlaws were apparently in no dread of further pursuit, there were two of the party that were not sharers in their confidence.

Those two were Mexican Joe and Texas Kit. They were often alone and discussing the situation, and the advance being in the hands of Texas Kit, Mexican Joe was by his side when duty did not call him elsewhere.

They both seemed to dread Buffalo Bill, and have as wholesome a fear of Lieutenant Ames.

"Those two are a bad team to work against us, Joe," said Texas Kit.

"They are."

"They will go anywhere and take chances with their small force."

"Every time."

"Now though I believe we threw them off by deserting our horses, we may not have done so, and they may be even now on our trail."

"I have hope that they will not dare venture up here into the Indian country with so small a force, and the forts cannot spare more soldiers to come."

"Very true, Joe; but a small force guided by Buffalo Bill, well-mounted and armed with the very best weapons, could hold hundreds of red-skins at bay, and on a rapid push might get through this country, for you must know the best braves are all off on their fall hunt and by the time those here rallied, the soldiers could get well out of the way, pick up our trail and follow it to wherever we go."

"I tell you, Joe, I am still in dread of Buffalo Bill."

"So am I," was the frank response, "he is one to fear."

CHAPTER XLVI.

A PLOT TO ESCAPE.

WHEN either Texas Kit or Mexican Joe expressed their fears to Golden Hair, that their pursuers might still be on their trail, as Buffalo Bill was not the man to yield, once he set out to accomplish a purpose, she laughed at them and said:

"Why, that man Cody is a nightmare to you both."

"I grant it, and a bad one," said Joe.

"You speak of him as one who possesses super-human powers, a man whom a bullet or a knife could not close the career of as quickly as with any one else."

"It's so, for he bears a charmed life, Golden Hair."

"There is no such thing as bearing a charmed life."

"Is there not?"

"No."

"I differ with you."

"Why?"

"Well, I have known men who did bear charmed lives, and take Cody for instance."

"Bahl you make me tired," the woman said contemptuously.

"Yes, and he'll tire you still more, when you find that he is still on trail."

"It would take a thousand soldiers to pass through this Indian country after us."

"It might, doubtless would, and yet Buffalo Bill has alone, time and again, ridden and scouted through the Sioux, Cheyenne and other Indian countries."

"He has been a thousand times under fire, has been for weeks alone in the midst of danger, given up a hundred times as lost, been reported shot, tortured to death, scalped and all that and more, yet see how he comes out in the end with a whole skin, bobs up serenely every time and never says die."

"I tell you the man does bear a charmed life; and I only urge that every step of the way we take means to cover up our tracks, that we do all in our power to throw him off the scent, or we'll wake up some morning to find him making us a visit, see if we don't."

The long dissertation of Texas Kit had its effect upon Golden Hair, for she could not but be impressed by it.

She was not indifferent by any means, only she could not see how they could be pursued through the Navaho country by a handful of men, even though Buffalo Bill led them.

So she said:

"Well, once across the Colorado we will be safe, for he will not dare follow us there."

"Will he not?" asked the Mexican.

"No."

"Did he not, with Lieutenant Ames and a small band of scouts and soldiers, cross the Colorado and wipe out the Gold-Hunters' retreat, rescuing that English Lord Mildmay and, also Captain De Villers, while they sent for reinforcements and struck the villages of Flying Fox a blow that they will remember when they reach the happy hunting-grounds?"

"Oh, yes, if Buffalo Bill is still on our trail, just look for him to follow us to the end of it."

"All right, we will do all we can to cover up our tracks," and so saying the woman turned away.

This conversation was all overheard by Captain De Villers, and it gave him renewed hope.

"If those two men have a fear still of Cody's pushing on, then there is hope that he will," said the captain, and his spirits arose accordingly.

But he did not relax any effort to make his escape, but kept on plotting, planning, watching and waiting.

The opportunity came sooner than he had looked for.

They had halted for the night on the banks of the San Juan River, where there was a thick grove of pinon trees, with a valley near spread with the finest of meadow grass.

Fires were built among the nooks of the rocky cliffs overhanging the pinon timber, for the nights were growing cool, and the outlaws arranged themselves for a comfortable sleep.

The prisoner spread his blankets between two rocks, placing a soft mattress of fine straw beneath him, and, having had a good supper, retired early.

But he did not go to sleep, as when eating his supper his eyes had fallen upon a bunch of keys on the ground.

He quietly put his foot upon them and when he could do so, reached down and picked them up.

He knew that on that bunch of keys was the one that unlocked the manacles upon his ankles.

Quickly he slipped the key off and dropped the bunch where he had found them.

He ate more heartily than ever that night, or appeared to do so, and unperceived managed to stow away considerable food about his clothes.

Hobbling about unobserved for no one expected a man in irons to escape, he picked out of a belt of arms a revolver, and slipped a knife and rifle from another place, for the outlaws had laid them aside upon coming into camp, though just where they could seize them at a moment's warning.

Then he went to his blankets, and taking his canteen and another that he picked up from the outlaw nearest to him, he went to the stream and filled them with water.

This done he returned to his blankets and laid down, his treasure close at hand.

But it was not to sleep for he was never wider awake in his life, and his eyes roved over the camp and its occupants.

He saw Golden Hair go to the camp-fire, look about on the ground and stooping quickly down pick up her bunch of keys.

It was a moment of awful suspense to him to see if she looked to observe if all were there.

But she did not and going to the camp, apart from the others, she turned in for the night.

Then the outlaw who cooked for the outfit banked his fire and went to his blankets, and soon after all had retired except Texas Kit who was to stand guard until midnight when he would be relieved by the Mexican.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A BATTLE FOR LIBERTY.

An hour passed after the camp was quiet, but Captain De Villers lay as quiet as though sound asleep.

He did not intend to make any mistake, so determined to await until the guard was relieved at midnight.

He knew at the proper time Texas Kit would come into the camp and awake Mexican Joe, who would relieve him of duty as a sentinel.

Then would be his chance to make his escape, he decided.

It seemed hours that he waited, that Texas Kit would never come, but he curbed his impatience and waited.

At last a dark form glided noiselessly by him, for the firelight still lingered, and bending over the Mexican, who lay within ten feet of Captain De Villers, said:

"Come Joe, your turn now."

"All right, I'll be with you in a few minutes."

"The horses are O. K. and I have seen nothing, heard nothing."

"All right," and with a yawn the Mexican sat up as the Texan walked back to his post.

After a moment, as though he would like to sleep on, the Mexican arose, drew on his boots and coat, and seizing his weapons moved away from his bed.

What prompted him Captain De Villers never knew, but after passing by him he turned back, came to his blankets and bent over him.

The prisoner lay as still as death, feigning sleep.

But the Mexican was curious, and he thrust his hands under the blanket to feel the manacles.

This attention Captain De Villers had not looked for and so he had already unlocked the manacles and removed them.

He knew, before the Mexican, with a savage oath threw himself upon him, that he was discovered, and he resolved then and there to make a desperate attempt to escape.

Suiting the action to the determination, he at once pressed his revolver against the Mexican and pulled trigger, for in spite of the masks which he and Texas Kit had steadily worn he had recognized the traitors who had betrayed him long ago and belonged to the band of Golden-Hunter outlaws.

The shot rung out loud and clear, there was a groan from the Mexican, and seizing his weapons with his own, Captain De Villers, covered with his blankets, bounded into the pinons.

The camp was aroused by the shot, and all sprung to their feet in alarm.

Just awake they did not see the dark form bound into the pinons, and hearing no other shots, Golden Hair ran toward the blankets of the prisoner.

At first, in the dim light she believed that the prisoner was there, but bending over she beheld only the form of Mexican Joe, still in death.

"My God! the prisoner has escaped!"

"He has killed Mexican Joe!"

"Tremain! Kit! Navaho! all of you, catch him on your lives!"

The wild cries of the woman rung through the timber, and reached the ears of Texas Kit who had gone back to his post near the horses.

He was at once placed upon his guard, and felt sure that the prisoner would endeavor to seize a horse.

In the darkness he could see but indistinctly, but he heard running feet, and suddenly almost over him dashed a horse and a rider was upon his back.

Texas Kit fired several shots in rapid succession, but neither seemed to do any damage, while the one shot that came in response, tore through his right arm, dangerously near his body, and the shock knocked his revolver from his hand, while away dashed the escaping prisoner.

But as he disappeared, in the darkness there were heard two other shots in quick succession, followed by a neigh of pain from the horse and a heavy fall among the bushes.

Instantly Texas Kit ran to the scene, and he beheld the horse and rider down, while within a few feet lay another form.

Fearing that the prisoner might only be playing a trick on him, the Texan placed his revolver to his head and said sternly:

"Move and you are a dead man!"

But the prisoner lay motionless, and Texas Kit called out:

"Ho, the camp!"

"Bring a pine torch here, for I have the prisoner."

A cry of delight was heard in the woman's voice and the answer came:

"We'll be there in a minute."

"Bravo, my brave Texas Kit!"

The Texan at once saw his chance to play a trump card in his favor.

He was devotedly attached to Mexican Joe, for the two had been comrades for a long while, and he had heard Golden Hair say that the Mexican had been killed.

But in sorrowing for his friend he did not lose sight of his own advantages, and so determined, as soon as he saw that the outlaw who had tried to head off the escaping prisoner had a bullet in his brain, that he would take all the credit of fetching the escaping man down.

His horse was dead, and the prisoner had fallen heavily, but whether only stunned by the fall, or wounded by the shots of the outlaw Texas Kit did not know.

He bent over him and found that he was alive, but unconscious, apparently.

It did not take long for Golden Hair and those at the camp to reach the scene, and the bright torchlight revealed the situation fully, the dead outlaw, the dying horse, the prisoner lying as still as death and the wounded Texan master of the situation.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BROUGHT BACK.

GOLDEN HAIR's first act upon reaching the spot was to drop down by the side of the prostrate prisoner.

"Did you fire on him?" she asked savagely.

"Oh, no, not when I knew that you wished him to live."

"Then he is not wounded?"

"No."

"What is it?"

"I shot his horse and he was thrown heavily and stunned by the fall."

"Thank Heaven he is not dead."

"He has his weapons still, you see, Golden Hair, so you better take them, or returning to consciousness he will use them, and he is a dead shot and a hard one to master."

"You are right," and the woman quickly removed the belt of arms from De Villers.

"He killed Tony, there?"

"Oh, yes, he tried to head him off and was shot dead, then I fired upon his horse, and at the same time he opened on me and gave me a bullet through my arm."

"Ah! you are wounded?"

"Yes, but I do not think it is serious."

"We will go to camp and see."

"Take him up and bear him to the camp," and she pointed to the prisoner, while the command was to the two remaining outlaws of the stage-coach trio, and who had just lost their comrade.

They obeyed, Tremain and the Navahoes keeping close to them as they bore their burden along.

"Return for your dead comrade," called out

Golden Hair, and stepping up to the Texan, she said:

"You have done nobly, my brave Kit."

"Thank you."

"I am more than sorry that you are wounded."

"You called out that my poor pard was killed."

"Mexican Joe is dead."

"Poor fellow, now I am alone."

"The prisoner killed him."

"Yes, of course."

"I was tempted to avenge Joe, but for your sake refrained."

"You did right."

"The time for his death and your revenge has not come yet, but it will."

"When?"

"Before very long, for I have to get certain information from him before he dies."

"He will tell you nothing."

"He must."

"You cannot force him."

"I can."

"How?"

"By threats of death."

"He does not scare easily."

"I will offer him his freedom then."

"Ah! buy what you wish to know?"

"Yes."

"Then he may sell."

"No doubt of it."

"And if you get the information you wish?"

"I'll see that he does not go."

"Kill him, in fact?"

"He will die by some one's hand."

They had now reached the camp, and at once sending the Indian chief to stand guard, Golden Hair turned to the squaw and said:

"Throw more wood on the fire, Sun Eyes, for we wish a bright light."

The squaw obeyed, while the two outlaws, having placed the prisoner by the fire, went back after the body of their comrade.

"Kit."

"Yes, Golden Hair."

"There lies your pard, look at him, and then come here to me, for I wish to look to your wound."

The Texan walked over to where the Mexican lay, and with head uncovered knelt beside him, taking the hand rapidly getting cold with death, and said:

"Good-by, old pard, for it has come to you first, and it will be my time next."

"I will never forget you, and the promises I made you, should you die first, I will keep."

"Good-by."

The Texan spoke in a tone of deepest sorrow, and dashing a tear from his eye he folded the hands gently upon the breast, closed the wide open eyes, and rising walked over to where Golden Hair stood watching him.

She had been impressed by his sorrow, and yet as he came up he said in a tone of almost indifference:

"I wish you would look at this wound of mine, Golden Hair, for I believe it is worse than I supposed."

She had just put the manacles again upon the feet of the prisoner, Little Coyote having found the key of them where the blankets had been spread.

She saw the eyes of the prisoner open and rest upon her with a cool stare, and she said:

"So you did not escape after all, De Villers?"

"No, but I made a close call of it and rid the world of two base villains at least," was the reply.

"Are you hurt?"

"No more than stunned, that is all, leaving me a headache."

"Well, you killed two of my men, and I am not one to forgive or forget."

"But if you are suffering I will do all I can for you."

"Thanks, no, I will be all right in the morning."

"I had a hard fall that knocked the breath out of me and my head hit heavily, but no damage is done, so leave me to go to rest, and that will do me the most good."

The woman turned away with a frown and confronted the Texan, while the prisoner hobbled over to his bed, the Indian boy having brought his blankets.

As he spread them the two outlaws came up and placed the body of their comrade down almost by his side, Mexican Joe also lying within reach of his hand; but with a glance at one and then the other the prisoner turned over and closed his eyes to go to sleep.

CHAPTER XLIX.

TO BURY HIS DEAD.

"I TOLD you he was game," said Texas Kit, as he saw the prisoner roll himself in his blankets, apparently unmindful of the dead bodies upon either side of him.

"Oh, yes, I never disputed that, for I know his race."

"Had his mother been a different woman from the one she was, I would have loved that man as devotedly as now I hate him."

"But I forget that I have no right to dream of the past, for my dreams are all for the future,"

and that man, Trevor De Villers is the cornerstone of all my air-castles.

"Now let me see your wound, which I have so long neglected."

The coat was taken off and the sleeve of the hunting-shirt rolled up, thus exposing the wound.

The bullet had passed through the arm above the elbow, and the wound had bled freely.

The woman looked at it with the eye of one experienced in wounds and said:

"It did not touch the bone nor cut an artery, so you are all right."

"I will dress it and in a few days you will be well again, but with two of my men dead and you wounded, it cuts down my force one-third."

"Better than that double, Golden Hair," said the Texan quietly.

"Yes, but we will not get away from here before noon to-morrow."

"Better not delay any longer than we have to."

"The dead are to be buried, your wound again dressed, and we have fewer hands to do the work, so it will be all of noon before we get away."

"Now go to sleep and I'll do the same, for the Navaho is on guard," and the woman walked back to her blankets.

The camp was not up until sunrise the next morning, all sleeping late, but Sun Eyes set to work to get breakfast, the Little Coyote took his father's place as guard, and the two outlaws led the horses to water and staked them out again in a fresh grazing-place.

When she appeared Golden Hair found the Texan astir, his arm in a sling, yet making light of his wound.

The dead lay where they had been placed the night before, and Captain De Villers, all unmindful of them, was making his toilet as best he could.

"How is your head this morning?" asked Golden Hair, approaching him.

"Fine, thanks."

"You feel no evil effects of your fall?"

"Not the slightest."

"I have some work for you to do after breakfast."

"Just name it."

"To dig two graves."

"With pleasure," was the surprising response, and seeing the woman's look of amazement Captain De Villers continued in a vein of sarcasm:

"Why surprised, for is it not just that a man should bury his own dead?"

"When one is dead he depends wholly upon his friends to look after him."

"In this case it is a case of foes, or was, for I feel no enmity to a dead man, and I shall do my duty by them."

"How deep would you like me to dig, and do you wish separate graves, for you know they are two of a kind?"

With all of her brazen effrontery, nerve and wickedness the woman was amazed at the cool manner in which the prisoner spoke of the two whom his own hand had just put out of the way.

"Well, you are the coolest devil I ever met," she said as she turned upon her heel.

"Thanks awfully," rung in her ears as she walked away and the prisoner continued his toilet apparently not in the least disturbed, unmindful of his surroundings and his danger.

Going to seek Tremain, Golden Hair told him that she had ordered the prisoner to dig the graves of the two men.

"Well, Golden Hair, I am wicked, yes, was really reared to believe that sin was a virtue, but you can outdo me in your cool cruelty, for I could not tell that man to bury his own dead."

"He killed them, let him bury them."

"It would not surprise me to hear you ask him to read the burial service of the English church over them and end up by singing the hymn 'I would not live away.'"

"Could I force him to do what I wish I might, but he cannot be driven."

"Now help me dress the Texan's wound, and remember now, we rely wholly upon him, so we must spare him all we can."

"I am willing; but you know how ignorant I am of this blasted country and its ways."

"You'll know more before you leave."

"Have you been studying the names of the De Villers family, and what I wrote down for you to be sure and learn?"

"Oh, yes, I know the family history from Adam down to myself; but have no fear, for De Villers was a youth when he went to college, and he entered the army very young and was for years in India, while he has been three years in this country."

"As it will be a year before I go back, his long absence will account for any trifling mistakes that I may make, so don't you worry."

"Here comes the Texan, so let us dress his wound, then have breakfast and get this burying done with, for I do not like it."

Just then Texas Kit came up and his wound was again neatly dressed, after which they went to breakfast, the prisoner being allowed to eat with the masked men, but apart to himself.

CHAPTER L.

AT AN OUTLAW'S GRAVE.

WHEN breakfast was over Golden Hair, Tremain and Texas Kit approached the prisoner together, and the former said:

"Now we are ready, De Villers, for the grave-digging."

"I am also at your service; but let me ask that man why he keeps up the farce of wearing a mask and thus hiding his beauty from the world, for long ago I recognized both him and his dead comrade here."

"Who was he?"

"Mexican Joe he was known as, but better acquainted with him than I was, you might be able to find something good to write of him in his obituary, for it is said the worst of us have some good in us."

"Still, were I called upon to deliver his funeral oration, and I would be pleased to do as much for you, I should speak of him as a dishonored officer of the Mexican Army, a man who with all to make him seek a name of honor, loved guilt and went wrong, while later, he became my guide, was a traitor, and again led my friend Mildmay into a trap."

"You see that I know him!"

"You appear to."

"But who am I?"

"You are a man who is ashamed to let his true name be known so masquerades under the sobriquet of Texas Kit, a man as wicked as was that dead Mexican your boon companion."

With a jerk the Texan tore the mask from his face, saying sharply:

"As he knows me, Golden Hair, there is no need of longer wearing this mask."

"None."

Golden Hair spoke in a low tone, and then asked suddenly:

"There is one other who wears a mask here."

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

"I do not."

"Do you think you do?"

"No."

"Have you any suspicion of who he is?"

"None."

"I am glad of it."

"But I do know that he is some renegade Englishman, for his speech betrays his country, as I never knew it would until I, an Englishman, lived for some time in this country."

"Still you do not know him?"

"No."

"All right, see that he does not find out," and she turned to Tremain, who responded:

"He will know me at the proper time."

"Come, now to work on those graves," added Golden Hair, sternly.

"Do you wish them separate?"

"Yes, my friend must have a grave to himself," said the Texan.

"They were two of a kind and both travel the same trail to—"

"Dig two graves," added Golden Hair, and the prisoner raised his hat with mock politeness and answered:

"I obey."

Among the things that had been retained in the pack were a pick and shovel, and these were brought to the prisoner by Sun Eyes.

He took them indifferently, went to the place pointed out as the spot where the graves were to be dug, and set to work.

A powerful man he made every blow of the pick tell, and was not long in digging the graves, the others all standing about and looking on.

When the graves were finished the bodies were brought, wrapped in blankets and lowered into their final resting-place.

As they were lowered by Tremain and the Navaho, Captain De Villers raised his hat and stood with uncovered head.

The Texan glanced at him, but saw in his face no mock respect, for he stood in the presence of death before whom all must bow, be the one who is lowered into his grave what he may.

The woman saw the act of respect and she too felt that there was no mockery there and, shamed by the act she raised her sombrero, the Texan instantly doing the same while the hats of the others were taken off also.

"Golden Hair?"

"Yes, Kit."

"It may seem like mockery, and yet it is not so, now that poor Joe is dead, and I have a favor to ask of you?"

"Well, name it, Kit."

"I have several times on the march heard you humming the words of a song I knew in my boyhood, and which I often heard my mother sing, and also I have heard it at funerals."

"Will you sing it now over my dead pard?"

"Do you mean 'Forgiven,' Kit?"

"I do, Golden Hair."

"Don't refuse me."

The woman did not reply, but she caught the pleading look of the Texan, and her face flushed and paled with inward emotions that the request called up.

The air and words came back to her from her younger days, and she recalled how it told of one who, dying in sin, had been forgiven when dead.

She faltered a moment, her lips quivered, but

catching the appealing look of the Texan, and seeing that in the face of the prisoner there was no scorn, no rebuke, she began in a low voice to sing the plaintive air and touching words of "Forgiven."

At first her voice was low, but it rose gradually, and in rich volume floated through the timber, thrilling with its melody those who listened, and causing the eyes of the Texan outlaw to fill with tears.

As she uttered the last sweet note she turned away, and perhaps it was because her heart was momentarily softened, she laid her hand upon the prisoner, and said in a kindly tone:

"Come, you need not bury him—they will."

She led him to his camp and walked away, while Texas Kit remained to see the grave filled in.

When this was done dinner was gotten ready, and soon after the horses were brought up, and the party mounted, the prisoner's feet being chained beneath his horse.

Going to the front with the Navaho, the Texan led the way, Golden Hair and Tremain following, then the two outlaws with the pack-horses, Sun Eyes guarding the prisoner, and Little Coyote bringing up the rear as a scout.

But all noticed as the Texan rode away he turned many a sorrowful glance back toward the grave where he was leaving his dead comrade.

CHAPTER LI.

THE RECOGNITION.

THE outlaws were certainly impressed by the loss of two of their number, and the wounding of Texas Kit by their prisoner, while he seemed the most cheery one of the party.

"We have enough as it is, Tremain, to guard the prisoner, once we reach the Kaibab Mountains, for we will go by my cabin, get my things there, and the Indians you know accompany us."

"How long will this guard duty keep up?" asked Tremain in response to what Golden Hair had said.

"It will keep up until I can learn certain facts from Trevor De Villers that it is very important for me to know, and through me that you should learn all, for we must make no mistake, Tremain."

"No, there must be no mistake, for if there is one you know that I would be recognized as I am, Villers Tremain, and I am under the death-sentence now, so would simply end my life upon the gallows."

"There shall be no mistake, Tremain, I promise you."

"And let me tell you that the killing of De Villers, when it is to be done, must be sure, as if he were to turn up again, after I am in power, then I would hang, yes, and you too, I guess."

"I have committed no crime, Tremain; but I feel just how anxious you are, and as you will have to do the killing yourself you can certainly make no error."

"And then?"

"After a certain time I will return to England and post myself fully on the situation, writing you."

"Well?"

"You are then to sail for England, and you will have a very romantic story to tell of your coming to America, Lord Mildmay's coming after you, your life on the frontier and how you were kidnapped and again taken into captivity."

"I understand."

"It will make a hero of you, and of course, as the inheritor of the title and estates of De Villers you will be greatly sought after, and will have your pick among the best ladies of the land, yet you must be true to your old love, Lady May of Moorlands, for she is enormously rich, you know."

"That will be the hardest work I will have to do."

"How is that?"

"To deceive a woman, for I must be almost De Villers himself to pass muster with a woman who loves him."

"Bosh! women are fooled as easily as men, and never fear in that quarter."

"It will have been some time since you met, and you know you will be aided by getting De Villers's things which he put in storage when he came West, and there will be letters and papers there that will thoroughly post you—yes, her own letters to him."

"But that is not what I wish to speak to you about now."

"What is it?"

"It is that we have to cross the Colorado by ferry."

"We did so coming."

"True, but it was a dark and rainy night then."

"What had that to do with it?"

"Just this: I do not wish to be recognized by the ferryman."

"You know him?"

"Well, yes, I know him," was the hesitating reply.

"Then wear a mask, if you do not care to be seen by the ferryman."

"I cannot without attracting his attention the more."

"What object is there in your hiding your identity?"

"That I cannot, will not tell you."

"All right, get across the ferry as best you can without recognition, but if he does recognize you, he shall not make capital out of it, I promise you."

"All right; once I am across that ferry unrecognized, I will feel safe, and not until then."

"What have you to fear from recognition?"

"Much, everything, and more I cannot explain; but, if I am known, I fear I will lose all; that it will break up our plans, shatter our every hope," and the voice of the woman trembled with emotion.

"Then rest assured it will not destroy hope, for I will see to it that no harm will befall you."

"Now when do you expect to reach the ferry?"

"Day after to-morrow evening, near dark; I would rather have it after nightfall, only you heard the ferryman say he would never answer a night call again."

"That is so," and the masked man seemed to become lost in a deep reverie, for he did not speak again.

There was no trouble in finding a good campground that night, and the next, as their trail lay as near the river as it was possible to go, and in spite of Texas Kit's urging, Golden Hair did not seem anxious to hurry on.

The next night another good camping-place was found, and on the day that was to bring them in sight of the ferry, Golden Hair seemed strangely nervous.

"You really appear frightened, Golden Hair," said Tremain, as they rode along together.

"I confess that I am."

"And you will not tell me why?"

"For fear of recognition."

"Yet you do not say what you have to fear from being recognized?"

"That is my secret."

"Well, all I can say is that since the Texan has taken off his mask, you had better wear it."

"I will try it."

So the day passed on and it was drawing near sunset when the party halted under the shadow of the mighty red cliffs that overhung the ferry.

Taking a bugle from its hiding-place, where the ferryman had shown them he kept it, when he put them across, Texas Kit blew it loudly.

Almost immediately, while all eyes were looking for him to put out from some cove on the other shore, the ferryman appeared before them like an apparition.

Golden Hair had not yet put on her mask, and turning deadly pale her eyes were riveted upon the face of the ferryman who started, changed color and cried:

"My God! in spite of your male attire I know you—you are—"

"For God's sake hush!" cried the woman in a tone of anguish and he said no more.

CHAPTER LII.

THE FERRYMAN.

THE ferryman was a well-built man, with an intelligent, strong face in which there was stamped courage and determination.

He had the look of one who was ever on the watch to guard against a foe, and his actions were quick, nervous and decisive.

Dressed in a suit of homespun, top-boots and a slouch hat, the large brim of which fell over his forehead, thus sheltering his face, his keen, restless eyes looked out from underneath with the gaze of one who was a reader of human nature and took in a man or a situation at a glance.

He had seen the party approaching the river, and from a hiding-place had heard what they said and looked them over.

As though certain that there was no harm to him in their coming, he had suddenly appeared.

Tremain had alone been the one to hear what was said between Golden Hair and the ferryman, though the Texan had caught a word or two and seen the excitement shown by the woman.

He had shown no sign of having done so, while Tremain, prepared for it by the words of Golden Hair, had seen that she appeared to have just cause of alarm for some reason.

The ferryman had said no more after her earnest appeal, but with a glance at her turned his gaze upon Tremain's masked face.

He appeared slightly uneasy at seeing a masked man with the party, but addressing his words to Tremain said:

"You desire to cross the river, sir?"

"Yes and without delay."

"My boat is large enough to carry you all; but the horses must swim."

"It is as we did before."

"Ah, yes, you were alone then, but it was night so I could not see you though I recall your voice."

"Now you are masked, sir."

"Yes, I have reasons for hiding my face from one of our own party," coldly said Tremain.

"Indeed?"

The ferryman turned to the prisoner, start-

ed as he beheld him, with sudden recognition and surprise in his glance.

Then he walked up to him boldly and said:

"How do you do, my friend?"

"Ah, Pard Johnson, I am glad to see you again," and Captain De Villers held out his hand which the ferryman warmly grasped and answered:

"And I am sorry to learn that you are a prisoner."

"Yes, luck is against me just now, but it's a long lane that has no turn in it, you know."

"Yes, yes, so it is said," thoughtfully answered the ferryman, and then asked suddenly:

"What is it all about?"

"I was captured in a stage coach and held for ransom—that is all I can tell you."

"Hans out!"

"Why, my friends, I know this gentleman well, for he escaped from an outlaw band that had their retreat up in the red cliffs."

"They pretended to be Gold-Hunters, were on good terms with the Indians, and yet they were guilty of many lawless deeds."

"This man escaped from them and I befriended him."

"He had a score to settle with them, and as Buffalo Bill and a party of soldiers came here and wiped them out, I guess he squared it."

"Now he is your prisoner, and I wish to help him if I can," and the ferryman spoke earnestly.

"Well, you cannot, ferryman, so attend to your duty here, as we are anxious to cross," said Texas Kit sternly.

His words attracted the attention of the ferryman who said quickly:

"Ah! I have seen you before, my friend?"

"Yes, I am one of the outlaw band that Buffalo Bill wiped out, yes the last one of them."

"I thought it."

"Surely a strange party this, a woman in man's attire, an outlawed Gold-Hunter, a masked man and a prisoner who appears to be the best of the lot, with three Indians added—yes, a strange party surely."

"What have you to do with what we are, ferryman?"

"Come, put us across the Colorado, or others coming here will find no ferryman," threatened Texas Kit, dropping his hand upon his revolver. "You cannot terrify me, pard, for I am no fool to be here unprotected."

"Why you could never draw that weapon from its holster, and if I raised my hand as a signal you would find that I was not helpless."

"Should you kill me in crossing, you would never land alive on the other shore, and remember, the Colorado has few crossings, none below here for many a long mile, and a boat swept past this point is doomed."

"Fire on me if you will and test what I say to you."

The cool manner of the ferryman made even the plucky Kit uneasy, and dropping his hand from his revolver he said:

"I want no quarrel with you, ferryman, seek none, so put us across the river and name your price."

"My price is the same to all, five dollars a head, payable in advance."

"There is your money," and the Texan tossed him fifty dollars in gold.

CHAPTER LIII.

A SECRET POWER OVER HER.

THE ferryman took the money, glanced over the party, counted the packs and saddles and said quietly:

"Thank you."

"I will take you across in two loads, your traps first, with the one who pitches the camp and your cook, so by the time you come over all will be ready for you."

"We will not camp on the other side," said Texas Kit.

"Oh, yes, you will, for there is no water, wood or grass for many a long mile."

"We will not camp nevertheless."

The ferryman made no reply to the Texan, but passing by Golden Hair, said in a low tone:

"You will camp on the other shore, so arrange it to do so, for I must see you."

"Yes, Kit, we must camp there, for remember, I know this country and the ferryman is right, we have no prospect of water, wood or grass for a very long distance."

"It is my advice to push on," said Texas Kit.

"And mine, too," added Tremain.

"Yes, heap good to go, no good stay here," the Navaho chief remarked.

But Golden Hair said in her determined way, as she caught a glance from the ferryman, and which did not escape the prisoner's observation:

"We camp on the other shore under the cliffs yonder."

"It is my wish, and we can get some vegetables and fruit from the ferryman here, whose home is up the canyon."

Texas Kit still urged to go on, but Golden Hair said with anger in look and tone:

"Go if you wish, but the rest of the outfit camps on yonder bank."

Texas Kit made no reply but set to work to strip the horses and put the saddles and traps in the boat, which was made of hewn logs, some

fifteen feet in length and eight feet in width, with high sides and propelled by two heavy oars.

It could carry across one or two horses and riders, but no more, and perhaps a wagon without the team.

With the traps went Texas Kit, the Indian chief and two outlaws, leaving Golden Hair and the others to come over on the second trip.

As the boat started the horses were driven into the water and after swimming about confused for a minute followed on after it as their pilot across.

Those on the shore watched the ferryman as he rowed with a strong stroke and handled his boat skillfully, for there was need of it in that wild river.

After a hard pull it reached the other shore, and the horses, with the exception of one that gave out and drowned in mid-stream, and another that went wide of the course and was swept down the current to dash upon the rocks, landed soon after.

Back came the boat for the second load, and it, too, landed safely, to find the camp pitched a couple of hundred yards away, the horses grazing in a fertile canyon, and the supper cooking.

As Golden Hair passed out of the boat, the ferryman said in a low voice:

"Go with me to my house."

"I will bring back vegetables and other things for you."

"But I dare not."

"You must go, for I will speak to you," was the stern response, and the woman, whose will was all-powerful with others, answered meekly:

"I will go."

Making an excuse that she was going to purchase vegetables, Golden Hair mounted one horse, and leading another with an empty pack-saddle, went away on the trail leading up the river, as soon as she had eaten supper, and for which she seemed to have little appetite.

It was growing dark, but she refused company, and disappeared from view a quarter of a mile away.

Just as she turned a bend in the river, she saw the ferryman awaiting her.

He rose from the rock on which he was seated, advanced, and taking the rope of the led animal, staked him out near, saying quietly:

"Stake your horse out also."

"I will stay but a minute."

"No, it will take many minutes to utter that which is between you and me, so stake your horse out."

He spoke firmly, as though determined to be obeyed, and Golden Hair quietly unwound her stake-rope and placed the horse near the other.

"Why did you wish to see me?" she asked in a faltering voice.

"Sit there and I will tell you."

"I can stand."

"Sit down and do not tire yourself by standing."

She obeyed and then asked:

"Why did you bring me here?"

"From curiosity."

"Curiosity?"

"Yes."

"I do not understand."

"I had a great curiosity, one that almost overwhelmed me, to see a woman who was dead appear again as a spirit, yet so nearly resembling her natural self in the flesh."

"Let me grasp your hand and see just how the grip of a ghost feels, for I have no dread of you, even if you do come from the grave," and he laughed in a grim, sarcastic way as he spoke, while Golden Hair appeared to suffer with every word that fell from his lips.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE DOUBLE THREAT.

"Do not be foolish, but tell me what you wish with me," said the woman with sudden anger glaring in her eyes.

"Do not blame me if I thought you were dead, for you so led me to believe when you left your home as you did."

"You see that I still am alive."

"Yes, very much alive."

"Why did you pretend to be dead?"

"You must not know, as it concerns me alone."

"And me?"

"How so?"

"Are you not the mother of my wife, Clarice, she that is beautiful in my sight, in face, form and character?"

"Has she, Clarice, not clung to me through all adversity and sorrow, and is she not now the mistress of one of my houses up this valley, not one mile away from here?"

"If it is not reason enough for my asking, that you are the mother of Clarice, let me give one other that is more than sufficient."

"And what is that?"

"You are a Mormon."

The woman started at his words and manner, and said quickly:

"I was."

"You are."

"I am not."

"Once a Mormon, madam, always a Mormon as you know, for your husband is a man of power, honor and distinction and he certainly has grounded you well in the laws of the Church."

"He suffered deeply for your loss, supposed death, for he loved you devotedly, cold as you ever were toward him, and more, he has placed in the burying-ground a beautiful marble monument to your memory."

"No, no, not that."

"It is true, and its white shaft towers above all the others near, while on its front is engraven the word—"

"Silence! I will hear no more, for it is not pleasant for one to hear an inscription upon her own tomb."

"I am telling you to prove how wholly you are dead."

"I am not dead, and you alone know it, of all the Mormon fraternity, and you must keep the secret."

"Why?"

"I ask it."

"That is not reason enough."

"I demand it."

"I obey no demands."

"Because I am a woman and you should be merciful."

"That is only a woman's reason."

"In the name of humanity, then."

"The church is greater than all humanity."

"In the name of Clarice, then."

"My wife, your daughter?"

"Yes."

"Why for her sake?"

"Would you cause her pain?"

"As a Mormon, wife she must suffer when the law demands it."

"You would make her suffer, then?"

"I would shield her from all suffering that it lies in my power to do."

"Would you let her know that I live, after she has mourned me dead, and have all her sorrow over again?"

"I cannot spare you."

"Spare her, then."

The man was silent and the woman, after a moment of silence asked with sudden eagerness:

"How is she, how is my child?"

"Suppose that I told you she was dead."

"I would not believe you."

"That she died of a broken heart, for she loved you dearly, yes, more than I ever knew child to love her mother, dear as the relationship is."

"I know that, and also that she was my idol, is still."

"Then why not believe her dead?"

"I know that she is not."

"How do you know it?"

"I will tell you how I know it."

"When I left my Mormon husband, I gave up the world, retiring to the life of a recluse, and seeking a home in the wilderness."

"I sought that home not very far from here, so that occasionally I could see my one darling and be happy in that one sight."

"You have seen her then?"

"Yes."

"And she has hidden this from me," and the man's face paled with anger.

"Don't be a fool, John, for she has never seen me, and, as you said, believes me to be dead."

"I was not such a fool as to allow that, to permit her to have a secret from you."

"She did not know then?"

"She did not."

"You swear it?"

"I do."

"I will believe you; but your motive in what you did?"

"To escape from a man I did not love, from bonds that held me as though they were of iron, from a life I despised."

"As a Mormon you should not so feel."

"I cannot govern my feelings."

"I am what I am, and so it is."

"You must return to your former life."

"Never."

"I say yes."

"Return, repent, and all will be forgiven."

"Never, I say."

"And I say you must, you shall!"

The woman's face became livid, her eyes flashed and her lips trembled as she answered him:

"You threaten me?"

"I do, for my duty demands it to the Church."

"You would betray that I am yet alive?"

"I must, I will."

"You will carry out this threat?"

"I will."

"Then hear my threat, Major John D. Lee, the Danite leader."

"Hear me tell you that if you do not swear not to betray my secret, that you have seen me alive and well, when I am believed by all to be dead, that I will send word to the Commander of Fort Wingate that you, the Major of the Danite Battalion, you the instigator of the Mountain Meadow Massacre, are the ferryman of the Colorado, with a price set on your head, and hiding here from the United States Government, whose officials are everywhere seeking for you."

"Do you hear, John D. Lee, what my threat is, and will you dare now betray me, when I

ask to be dead to the world, even to the daughter I love?"

"Answer me, sir, will you betray me now, when my threat hangs over your head?"

CHAPTER LV.

A COMPROMISE.

THE woman was aroused now and stood before the Mormon fugitive like an enraged tigress.

He had gone too far in his fealty to his Prophet and his church.

What was his duty to his creed he wished to do, and yet he was himself a man branded with a crime, against whom the hand of the law was raised, who was under condemnation of death as the instigator of one of the foulest crimes that ever disgraced the history of the American frontier, the Mountain Meadow Massacre.*

Whether guilty or not, John D. Lee was in hiding for the crime for which he was accused, and, a Mormon, still lived up to the tenets of his Church.

Believing it his duty to report that the woman, who had deserted her husband, was not dead, he yet was brought to face the alternative that his life would be the forfeit of his doing so.

Turning upon him as she did, with her threat to betray him, he was placed in a position from which he could only extricate himself in one way.

That way was to retract his threat.

At her words the beads of sweat broke out upon his face, his heart seemed to still its beating and his lips quivered.

He knew what his fate would be and he had no desire to thus die.

A brave man he would face death if duty demanded, but such a death as he would have to meet he shrunk from with horror.

A fugitive, he had ferried across the Colorado the very men who were searching for him, hoping for the reward placed on his head.†

With this cloud upon him he yet had established a comfortable home up a valley, overhung with lofty cliffs, and which his industry was making into a perfect garden-spot in the wilderness.

Must he, to betray this woman to the Church, allow himself to be dragged from that home now to die?

So he mused for several minutes before replying.

When she saw his struggle she waited, and feeling that he had come to a decision Golden Hair asked quietly:

"Have you decided to betray me, John?"

"Duty demands it."

"Yes, duty demands it and the Government demands your life."

"Ah yes."

"Which shall it be, duty or life?"

"Ah!"

"John."

"Well?"

"I have never believed you guilty of having led the Indians to massacre those poor settlers."

"I know that many believed it of you, but I do not."

"You are kind."

She could not tell whether he spoke sneeringly or not.

"Of course the Gentiles say that the Mormons urged it to prevent the settlement of Utah, that you were ordered to wipe out the emigrant train as a warning to others, but I cannot believe that you are guilty."

"Well?"

"Sull you are a fugitive so accused, and your life is in my hands did I betray you."

"I would not be treacherous, would not betray you, and I cannot believe that you will betray to the Church that I am alive."

"I cannot believe it, for I am simply freeing myself from a hateful alliance, doing no wrong to the Church, or to any one."

"Will you betray me, John?"

She had spoken in a strangely soft and fascinating way, for she was one who held the power to fascinate, and her splendid eyes were fixed upon his face as though in an appeal to his mercy, to his manhood!

He looked up at her, came under the spell of her power, saw in her face the features of the young and beautiful wife whom he loved above all others, and said frankly:

"No, I will not betray you, Kate, for I cannot do so if I would."

"I will keep your secret, and leave my life in your hands, as it has been in the past."

He held forth his hand, and she took it in both her own, while she replied:

*The Mountain Meadow Massacre is still fresh in the minds of many old settlers, for a wagon train of settlers were set upon in Mountain Meadow Valley, and ruthlessly put to death by Indians, led by white renegades in the disguise of red-skins. Major John D. Lee was suspected as the leader and flying for his life on the Colorado River at the ferry that now bears his name. Many believed him innocent but he was captured, tried, sentenced to death and was executed. The writer has been a guest in the home where he dwelt as a fugitive. THE AUTHOR.

†This is a fact in several instances, the officers never suspecting the ferryman of being John D. Lee.—THE AUTHOR.

"You are wise, John."

"Now tell me all you can of her."

He seemed to be pleased to speak of his wife, Clarice, and the two talked together for some time, the man at last remarking:

"I remember when our bishop returned from England, after his missionary work there, with you and your daughter as converts."

"I thought you then the most beautiful woman I ever beheld, and your daughter I regarded from the first as one to idolize, and I loved her, child as she then was, for she was only entering her teens."

"You married the bishop, and I was glad, for he was my friend, and I could thus see Clarice often, and she clings to me now as my wife, through all my sorrow and life of exile."

"No, Kate, I could never betray you; no, never."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE FUGITIVE'S RETREAT.

THE Mormon fugitive and the woman having come to a compromise, the man said:

"I will go on with your horse and pack-animal, and fill the pack full of vegetables for you, for I have a fine stock of all that is needed stored away; fruits also."

"You await me here, for it will not do for you to return so soon, or to go back without the things you presumably came for."

"I will do as you say."

"Spread your blanket there and rest until my return," and he unrolled the blankets from the rear of her saddle, and threw them to her.

Then he mounted her horse, took the other animal in lead, and rode away in the gathering gloom of night.

He had been gone but a moment when she said savagely:

"I will do it."

"I will see her! I could not be thus near her and not behold her face, for my mother's love has not died within me in spite of all that I have been guilty of."

"Yes, I will go."

She hastened along on foot and soon came in sight of his form ahead, indistinctly seen in the gloom.

Keeping him just in sight she followed for half a mile when he turned around a cliff that soared heavenward several thousands of feet.

Once around this bend and the moon, just peering over the cliffs, revealed to her a scene of beauty.

It revealed a canyon the entrance to which was barred by the Colorado River, save for the narrow trail she had followed.

It was half a mile wide at its mouth, and ran back a couple of miles until it ended against the cliffs.

The vast red range of rocks walled it in completely, save for that narrow trail, so that a mountain sheep or coyote could not readily descend into it, or leave it.

A stream dashing down from the cliffs flowed through the valley and emptied into the Colorado.

There was woodland, fertile pastures, cultivated fields, fences and in fact a perfect farm in a wilderness.

The moonlight also revealed here and there several cabin homes with out-houses near.

There were fruit trees, a large vegetable garden and all to make a comfortable home, with cattle, sheep and horses in the stable yard.

Such was the Mormon fugitive's home, and the woman stood gazing upon the scene in silence.

She saw light in the cabin, and heard the voices of children, while there came to her ears a plaintive song that told her but too well whose soft sweet voice it was she listened to.

She had taught that song to her daughter long years before.

The man had dismounted at the stable-yard, and leading the pack-horse to a cabin apart from the others had hitched him there.

Then he walked rapidly away to the cabin where the woman was singing.

The woman, gliding among the shadows of the trees followed as fast as she dared.

She heard the song cease suddenly, then voices in conversation came to her ears from within the cabin.

She drew nearer and reaching the shadow of a cedar tree stood gazing in through the open window.

There saw a table set for supper, and the man sat down to eat, while a woman came out of an adjoining room bearing a tray.

She could not hear what was said, but she saw that the woman served him as one she loved.

Upon the face of the Mormon fugitive's wife, her eyes were riveted, as the light from a lamp fell upon it.

It was a face to see and remember.

She was strangely young in years, and yet she looked to be one who had lived a life of sorrow and tribulation.

A beautiful face it was, gentle as an angel's, sad as a mourner's, but lighting up in the light of the presence of the man she loved, and stood in daily, hourly fear of having taken away from her to be led to his death.

If John Lee was guilty of the crimes of which he was accused, that young wife never believed it, and no power could convince her of his wickedness.

Her form was faultless in outline, graceful and she had the appearance of one reared in refinement and little used to the wild life she had to lead there.

John Lee ate his supper in haste, and kissing his wife went forth into the night again.

The watcher had stood like one spellbound and gazed at the woman, her eyes riveted upon her until she saw the man rise from the table.

Then, with a low moan she covered her face with her hands and turned away, while she murmured:

"And I am shut out from this joy!"

"No, no, it will come to me some day, for when I have won my fortune she shall fly from these wild scenes and come to me.

"She always loved me, and, when he is taken from her, she will gladly come.

"I could have him come too—no, he would never leave the country, never desert his Church, he is too thorough a Mormon to do that.

"But she must come, and to have her do so I can accomplish it only in one way—his death.

"Yes, I will have my child with me again, if I have to send word secretly to the Government where John D. Lee is hiding.

"He will be taken and executed, and she will cling to me, go with me to a home in a far-away land, where we can revel in the riches that will be mine.

"Ah! but I am dreaming bright dreams for the future, and may God help the awaking, if they come not true."

She watched the Mormon fugitive halt at the storehouse and then she hastened back to where he had left her.

Her heart was lighter now, for she had seen her daughter once more and brought her into the life the future promised for her.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE WAY GOLDEN HAIR TOLD IT.

WHEN John Lee returned to where he had left the woman, he found her reclining upon her blankets apparently asleep.

But she sprang up at the sound of his voice, rubbed her eyes and said:

"You have returned?"

"Yes, with the things I promised."

"You saw her?"

"Yes, she was waiting supper for me."

"You did not give her a hint of—"

"Oh, no, I would not bring a cloud upon her fair brow for the world."

"You are right; but what did you tell her?"

"That there was a party I was putting across the river and wished to take some provisions to."

"You were kind."

"I must return now."

"I will go to the bend with you, and from there you can see your camp-fires."

"Never fear for me."

"I will go thus far with you; but let me tell you that in the pack, which is overloaded for one horse, you will find potatoes, onions, beans, fruit, and I put in some fresh eggs for you and—"

"And what?"

"Some of her homemade bread which I thought you would like."

"Thank you, John," and she seemed touched by his kindness.

"Let me ask you a question, Kate?"

"Yes?"

"You live the life of a recluse you said?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the wilds anywhere."

"Who with?"

"The Indians you saw with me."

"Who were the white men?"

"Men I hired for a certain work."

"What money have you to live on?"

"I am a gold-hunter."

"Ah! and have found mines?" he eagerly asked.

"Though I have not struck it rich I have found enough to live on."

"Where do you get your provisions?"

"The Indian goes after them to the settlement of Kanab."

"And these men, you did not say who they were?"

"Miners," she said half hesitatingly.

"And the masked man?"

"Is one who came to this country as an English officer, to find a fugitive from justice."

"He found him and paid my miners large money to go after him, and I came along with my Indian to conduct them through the Indian country."

"But why does he wear a mask?"

The woman had determined to lie out of the scrape, and she had begun well, so, in answering the question she continued:

"The prisoner believes the officer to be dead, so he masks to prevent his finding out who he is until he turns him over to other officers in Salt Lake City, whither he is going."

"Then he too will go along, but keep out of sight and only appear at the trial against him."

"That is the story."

"And the prisoner is one whom I know."

"How did you know him?"

"He was a captive of the Gold-Hunters and escaped."

"I met him in distress, without food, and brought him to my home where he remained for awhile."

"Then he made a trip to Salt Lake, returning with fine weapons and all he needed for camping, and disappeared."

"I did not see him for months, when he came to me to buy provisions, and he told me that he was then on a trail of revenge."

"So it is that I have known him as an avenger, hunting certain outlaws down, and through all I have regarded him as a noble fellow, guilty of no wrong."

"You are mistaken in him, from all the officer tells me of him, and let me tell you that he killed two of my miners the other night and wounded the one you recognized as an outlaw, in his attempt to escape."

"I cannot blame him for that, for life is dear to us all."

"True; but he is a terror, mild and pleasant spoken as he is."

"I am sorry for him, very sorry, and I wish I could help him."

"See, there is your camp, but having come this far I will go on with you, Kate, and remain half an hour."

"I will be glad to have you do so."

They continued on together, the man walking alongside of the woman's horse, and arriving at the camp they found Texas Kit becoming anxious about Golden Hair's long stay and just about to start out in search of her.

"I am all right, Kit; but I was detained getting these provisions, and we will have a feast the next week or two, for see what a lot I brought."

All gathered around the pack-animal bearing the provisions, and eagerly looked them over, while John Lee said in a whisper to the prisoner:

"Where will you spread your blankets to-night?"

"They are there, close to the cliff," was the low reply.

"The very spot I wanted you in."

"Lie awake and await developments," and then in a loud voice he added:

"I am sorry to see you in this fix, comrade."

"Oh, it will come right in time," was the indifferent response, and the provisions having been packed away on several pack-saddles, to be ready for an early start and breakfast on the trail, they all gathered about the fire and chatted with the ferryman; Tremain, to whom Golden Hair had given a hint of what she had said he was, asking him a number of questions as though deeply interested in the reply.

"Well, friends, I must be going home, so good-night all and good by," and fugitive ferryman arose and took his departure.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE FUGITIVE MORMON TO THE RESCUE.

"I WILL save him."

Such had been the ejaculation of the Mormon fugitive when he left the camp of the outlaws.

His reference was of course to Captain Trevor De Villers.

He walked rapidly along on the trail to his canyon home, musing as he went.

"If that man is a villain then his face belies him."

"He told me he was an Englishman, and he said nothing to indicate that he had fled from his country but left it willingly."

"I am accused of crime, and it is for those who try me, if ever I am captured, to prove me guilty."

"His wrong may have been in taking life under strong provocation, but I cannot believe him a villain, no, no, he is not that."

"Even if he was I would save him if it were in my power to do so."

"I will go to his rescue to-night, and see if they can find him once I set him free and take him to the hiding-place I have for myself if the time comes for me to seek it."

"A hunted man myself, I feel deeply for that splendid fellow and I will help him."

"Heaven grant that I be successful."

"Now to perfect my plans."

He halted at the store-room as he spoke, opened it and took out half a dozen strongly made lariats.

These he took over to the cabin where he had gone before and his wife meeting him at the door he said:

"Clarice, I wish you to help me in a good deed."

"I am always ready, John," was the earnest reply.

"I know that, my dear."

"Did you take the provisions to the people?"

"Oh yes."

"They must have been glad to get them."

"They were indeed."

"How I wish that they could have come here and we could have entertained them."

"It would have been very unwise to take the risk, my dear, under the circumstances."

"Ah yes, so it would."

"I had forgotten; but then it would do me good to see a strange face."

"Clarice."

"Yes, John."

"You shall see one."

"Oh, will you take me to the camp?"

"No, I cannot do that, but I will take you to where you can see it, for I am going to help a poor fellow out of a scrape."

"What is it, John?"

"You remember of course the splendid fellow I once helped, and who came here for provisions every few months?"

"Oh yes, we called him the Hermit Gold-Hunter."

"Yes, and now this party have him a prisoner and they are taking him to Salt Lake, thence to New York and back to England."

"John."

"Well Clarice."

"Of what is he accused?"

"Murder."

"That man has done no wrong, John."

"That is my opinion."

"They have him though, for an English detective came here in search of him, found him and he is now taking him back with him, and it made me sad to see the fine fellow manacled, though he is as chipper as a bird."

"And you can help him, John?"

"I think so."

"You will try?"

"Yes."

"And I may help you?"

"That is what I wish you to do."

"I am so glad to help. What shall I do, John?"

"There are a couple of old lariats here, please get them for me."

She brought the two lassoes, and looking at them carefully he cut them into pieces some six feet in length.

Then he took the lassoes he had brought with him and said aloud, as though talking to himself:

"The cliff at that point is just two hundred and fifty feet high so that seven lassoes will do it, if they are forty feet in length."

"Get me another lasso, Clarice."

"I will give you the one I made."

She brought out a fine lasso, and then said: "I wish I could do more or really something for the poor man, for my mother was English, and I was born in dear old England."

"Oh, John! I wish you would leave this wild land and seek refuge in England, where we could live without constant dread of your death."

"My creed forbids me, Clarice, I must remain in America, be the consequences what they may to me."

"Now let us tie these lassoes together, and where they are connected, tie in one of these short pieces."

"What are they for, John?"

"I am going to lower this rope over the point of Serpent-head cliff."

"It is long enough to reach to the bottom below, where those people are encamped, and I can make the upper end fast around the pine tree that stands back a dozen feet from the point."

"Yes, John."

"These short loops will give him a rest every forty feet he climbs, and he needs them, for it will be a hard task to climb two hundred and fifty feet up into the air by a single rope, yet it is the only chance I have to save him."

"But will they not see you?"

"No, for I saw where his blankets were spread, right under the cliff, and I managed to get a chance to warn him to be on his guard and expect a rescue, so I shall lower the rope down to him when all are asleep and he will make the effort to escape."

"Dear, good fellow, John; you show what a good heart you have," and the Mormon wife looked lovingly into the face of the man of whom she would believed no guile.

CHAPTER LVIII.

A CLIMB FOR LIFE.

"JOHN."

"Yes, Clarice."

"I can get some more lassoes from the other cabins, and by twisting them together they will make the rope larger, for this seems so small for a man to climb by."

She was back again in a quarter of an hour, her arms filled with lassoes and ropes:

"I have all we want, John, so we can make a strong and large rope of it."

She threw them upon the floor as she spoke, and began to pull out those she considered best suited for the work.

In half an hour the long "life-line," as Clarice called it, was ready, and the ferryman coiled it around his shoulders, at the same time telling his wife to carry along an extra rope, in case it should be needed.

She selected one, and then ran into the next room to prepare for her tramp with her husband, returning in a few minutes, dressed in male attire, and wearing a slouch hat, which made her look like a handsome youth of sixteen.

It was growing late, and the two started off together at a brisk walk.

Going along the narrow trail winding its way at the base of the cliffs, and above the river some fifty feet, they saw, as they turned the bend, the glimmer of the camp-fires.

There was a canyon several hundred yards this side of the camp, and up this the trail led to the plain on the top of the plateau that formed one bank of the river.

Here the ferryman halted and said:

"Clarice, I will have to go up this trail, and from the ridge across the point to the Serpent Cliff, and I really think that you had better wait here, or return home, for if we had to run for it you would not be able to keep up."

"You know best, John."

"You are not afraid to go back alone?"

"Oh, no, what have I to fear?"

"You have your revolver?"

"Yes, it is here in my belt."

"Then you had better return, and as soon as I can I will be there with the prisoner."

She bade her husband good-night, and obediently returned to her home.

Having watched her depart he walked rapidly on up the trail, apparently caring little for the steep climb.

Reaching the top of the ridge he turned to the left and continued on out upon a point that ran out and almost overhung the waters of the river.

The point ended in a fantastic shape which had caused the ferryman to name it the Serpent Cliff.

Cautiously he went out to a tree standing back from the edge some twenty or thirty feet.

Placing his coil of rope upon the ground he went forward, threw himself upon the ground and bent over.

He saw the flickering fire-light below, and it gave just light enough for him to note where the sleepers were.

He picked out the bed of the prisoner, as he believed, and muttered:

"It is all right if they have not changed the sleeping-place for him."

"Still I must sink that."

Going back to the tree he uncoiled his rope and made one end fast to a limb.

The other end he drew toward the end of the cliff and began to slowly lower it.

Down the steep side of the cliff, looking like a huge serpent, crawled the rope end, growing longer and longer.

The rescuer drew it gently forward as he did so, letting the lowering end go down with caution, for he did not wish to knock off a loose rock, or make any mistake to arouse the camp.

Lower and lower descended the rope until at last it was given a slight pull.

Instantly he stopped lowering for this told him that it had reached the bottom.

Again came the pull, three times in quick succession.

The ferryman answered the pulls by drawing up the end and lowering it several times.

Then he went back and saw that the upper end was secured.

This done he came and again peered over the cliff.

As he looked he saw that the rope was swaying considerably, and that proved that the prisoner was coming up.

Holding his hand on the rope, and lying flat down to look below, the ferryman waited, feeling the rope as it swayed, and then marking the difference when the prisoner rested at the loops, and which he could not but know the use of.

Nearer and nearer drew the climbing man, until the ferryman could see the dark form clinging to the rope.

He climbed well, hand over hand, but constantly halted to rest at the loops as he came to them.

As he neared the top he climbed faster, and when he came in reach, the ferryman seized his arms, and he was up safely to the cliff.

But, as he reached the top, there came a voice behind the ferryman:

"Surrender or die!"

"Take your choice!"

CHAPTER LIX.

THWARTED.

WHEN John Lee said the few low words to Captain De Villers, Golden Hair had noticed him, and was at once on the alert.

Not feeling that she was particularly interested in the prisoner, she was sure that he would attempt to aid him to escape.

She caught just a word, but it put her on her guard, and when she was about to retire, she said to Texas Kit:

"Lie down to-night ready to be called at an instant's notice, for there may be work to be done."

"What is it?"

"I can tell you nothing now, but I will put the Navaho on his guard, and we three will be sufficient to thwart a certain plot I have reason to believe is to be executed to-night."

She then went to her blankets, not as far as usual away from others, and lay down just as she was.

She was just dozing off to sleep, when she

awoke suddenly, and glancing upward saw what she at first supposed was a huge snake crawling down the side of the cliff.

The moonlight revealed to her a moment after just what it was.

She coughed loudly, arose and walked over to where a spring trickled out of the rocks into a pool.

In going, she passed by Texas Kit and the Navaho, whose places of rest could not be seen from where the prisoner slept.

Both arose and quietly followed her.

She said a few hurried words to them and the three hastened away up the trail leading to the plateau above.

In the meanwhile the rope had descended and hung directly over the prisoner.

He saw it, for he was wide awake, watching and waiting, and he believed in the ferryman, that he would do what he said.

He reached his hand up and gave the rope a pull.

It hung over the serpent-like head of the cliff far above, and some three feet off from the rocks, so that he would have ample space to climb.

He realized how desperate was such a climb into mid air, yet that it was his only chance of escape, the only way in which the ferryman could save him.

He must leave his weapon, his coat and all else that would lighten him, for he knew well that every ounce counted in such a climb.

Drawing hard upon the rope he found it firm, and realized how hard the ferryman had worked to put two together and thus make it easier for him.

The moonlight no longer fell upon the cliffs, so he could not see the loops where he could rest, and said:

"I must wrap the line about me every now and then for a rest."

Bearing his weight upon the line it hung firm and strong, and with a long breath he started upward.

He had been a midshipman as a youth, before he changed into the army, and had frequently astonished his mates with his skill in climbing a rope.

It stood him in good need now, and he went up hand over hand, slowly but surely.

To his surprise and delight he came to the first loop, forty feet from the ground, just as he felt the need of rest.

Slipping his feet in the loop he thus stood and rested, clinging to the rope.

Up again he went with the same steady pull, and reaching the next loop once more rested.

A third climb brought him one hundred and twenty feet from the ground, nearly half-way, and reaching the loop there he slipped his feet through it and sat in it like a swing, determined to take a good rest, for he began to feel the strain.

He rested all of ten minutes and then once more began his perilous, gigantic work.

The fourth loop brought him to a height of one hundred and sixty feet, the fifth made it two hundred, and here he was forced to take another long rest, for he was now taxing his great strength too far.

He looked up anxiously and beheld the top of the cliff fifty feet above his head, yet it looked so very far.

To his joy he discovered that there were three loops in the line above him, and he muttered:

"Thoughtful fellow; he knew I would need them."

Then he glanced down upon the camp, as he sat there swinging in the loop two hundred feet above it.

His sinews were sore now, his breathing came hard, and his hands were red and blistered with the pull.

He was beginning to feel the strain.

But up again he went and he reached the loop just in time to realize that had he had to go the balance of the distance without rest he could not have made it.

Another long rest and a climb to the next loop followed.

Then another rest and he saw the goal he sought to reach was near at hand.

"It has taken me half an hour."

"It is well that my muscles were in such good training," he muttered, and swinging out of the last loop he started for the final climb.

It was hard, very hard work, just how desperate he realized when John Lee grasped him and pulled him safely upon the top of the cliff.

In placing the rope, the ferryman had left his belt of arms and rifle back of the tree, before referred to, and to go with as little weight as possible Captain De Villers had not brought his.

It was a cruel blow then, when he, panting, sore, exhausted, reached the goal he had risked life for, to behold Texas Kit suddenly appear before them, a revolver in each hand, and hear his words, while in the background, in shadow, stood two other forms that had their rifles covering the ferryman and himself, holding them at their mercy, and thwarting his escape in the very moment of triumph.

CHAPTER LIX.

STILL ON THE RETREAT.

JOHN LEE was fairly staggered when he beheld how cleverly he had been caught.

At first, being hunted himself, he felt that his foes were upon him, and he breathed more freely when he beheld the Texan standing in the moonlight, covering him with a revolver, and having slipped his wounded arm out of the sling, also holding one upon Captain De Villers.

Wholly unarmed and seeing others in the background he could but yield, and so said:

"I surrender of course."

"I tried to save you, captain, but I failed."

"We can do nothing now."

"So it seems! but the end is not yet."

"I thank you, sir, for your noble act toward me, and as I am again a prisoner, they cannot surely do harm to you."

"I do not fear that, sir, for did they harm me the Mormons would avenge me."

At this Golden Hair stepped forward and said:

"We mean you no harm, ferryman, but you should be careful how you interfere and attempt to rescue a prisoner, for I have asked that you be not held for it."

"You had better go, for, as you said, this officer has his prisoner once more."

"It was a clever scheme, well executed and deserved success, but fate is against you, captain."

"Now, ferryman, shoulder your rope and go."

The ferryman saw that he owed his safety from the Texan's revolver to Golden Hair, and he quietly coiled the line about him and departed in silence.

The others followed, Texas Kit walking by the side of the prisoner, whose manacles kept him from going down the steep trail readily.

"It is useless for you to attempt to escape from me, De Villers, for I have too much at stake to allow you to do so, and you have given us so much trouble I will now manacle your hands also," said Golden Hair, as she walked to where his blankets were.

"You have the power, I am helpless, so if it pleases you to be cruel do so," was the indifferent answer of the plucky prisoner.

The manacles were gotten out of a pack-saddle, placed upon the wrists of the prisoner, and then Golden Hair sought rest, congratulating herself upon having thwarted the ferryman's bold rescue of her captive.

The camp had been disturbed, but soon settled down to rest once more and was aroused only at dawn.

Anxious to get away and not see the ferryman again, Golden Hair hurried the preparations and soon after breakfast they were again on the march.

"We will press on to my home to-night, camp there until day after to-morrow, and then, Kit, the Navaho will be our guide into the Kaibob Mountains."

"Once we are settled there the Navaho, his squaw and Little Coyote can go to Kanab and purchase our winter's supply of provisions, for we will go into hiding until then, and it will not be but a couple of weeks before snow flies now," said Golden Hair, riding on ahead with the Texan, as they reached the plateau.

"Well, I would not delay longer than necessary at your cabin, Golden Hair, for you say you have provisions enough there to last us some weeks and the Navaho can push right on with us into the Kaibob Mountains."

"I have been talking with him about the country, and he tells me that it is accessible only at certain points, by going up canyons, that the top of the mountain is a plateau, filled with beautiful natural parks, valleys well watered with springs and streams and timbered heavily, while game of all kinds is in abundance."

"It must be a charming spot, though very cold in winter, and after the snow falls we cannot get out until spring, but we can make ourselves most comfortable and feel thoroughly safe."

"When the spring comes, we can carry out the plans I have in view, and the future, I am aiming at will come out my way."

"And the prisoner?" asked Kit.

"Well, I have certain information to get from him, after which it would not surprise me to see him die suddenly any day," was the significant response.

The Texan smiled but made no reply, and the fugitives held on their way at the steady pace Kit had set out upon.

After a long time he asked:

"What did you do about covering our tracks at the ferry? I am looking for Buffalo Bill and his party to come there on our trail."

"Still that bugaboo again, Buffalo Bill," mused the woman.

"Yes, and he will come on after us."

"I do not believe it."

"You said nothing to the ferryman then?"

"Oh, yes, I told him that if we were tracked he should say that there were but three of us, with our pack-animals, the Indians and myself, and that the rest had remained in the Navaho country."

"That was a good idea, if he believes it; but if he does not, he will still track us."

"He cannot beyond my cabin, for there I can cover up our tracks."

"How?"

"You will see when we get there," was the reply, and the woman waited until Tremain came along and rode by his side until her home was reached.

CHAPTER LXI.

GOLDEN HAIR'S LAST RUSE.

THE outlaws rode into the canyon when the home of Golden Hair was at just an hour before sunset.

The Indian seemed glad to get back, while Golden Hair, opening her door, threw herself into a seat with a sigh of relief.

"Why can we not stay here, for see, not a soul has been here since I left, and more, I'll wager that the horses I left shut up in the canyon are all there."

"Go and find out, Little Coyote."

The Indian had dashed away and Golden Hair repeated:

"Yes, why can we not stay here, Kit?"

"Simply because before we had been here one week Buffalo Bill would come and put ropes about our necks."

"It is always *Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Bill*."

"You ought to have a song by that name and sing it," sneered the woman.

"We will all sing it if we stay here, and I am not so sure we will not should we go into the Kaibob Mountains."

"No, Kit, I will cover up our tracks from here."

"How can you?"

"Well, Little Coyote?" and the woman turned to the lad who had come back.

"Ponies all there."

"See, no one ever finds this place, for I left nearly a hundred ponies up there should any one come to steal them."

"How can you ever cover up our tracks in leaving here?"

"I will tell you."

"Just before our leaving here, when I was away, a band of half a dozen Piutes tracked the Navaho home, and a fight occurred."

"Three of the Piutes were killed, one of them a lad, and the others ran off."

"Well?"

"The Navaho buried the dead Piutes up the canyon, and we can dig them up, leave their bodies out for the coyotes and buzzards to pick, burn this cabin out, and drive off our ponies toward House Rock Spring."

"One by one, on the way, we can drop out with the horses we ride and wish to take with us, muffling their hoofs so that they will leave no trail."

"I see."

"One of my men here, with Little Coyote, can drive the herd on up to Kanab and sell them there, both awaiting the coming of the chief after provisions, after he has guided us to a retreat in the Kaibob Mountains, and they can return with him."

"An excellent plan, Golden Hair, but will the ferryman tell what you asked him, after his attempt to rescue the prisoner?" asked Tremain.

"He will do as I told him to do," was the reply of Golden Hair.

But so great was the anxiety of Texas Kit to lose no time, it was decided to at once dig up the bodies of the Piutes and give the coyotes a chance to tear them to pieces that night, and make an early start in the morning.

Texas Kit was up before dawn, had the camp awake and began to load on the pack-animals the furniture and all else that they could take from the cabin.

It took a dozen horses to carry the loads, and ten riding animals were taken along, two being extras.

When all was in readiness the cabin was set on fire and they watched it burn until only the smoked walls remained.

The horses were then driven down from the corral up the canyon, and the mufflers for the hoofs of the riding and pack-animals were gotten ready.

Out of the canyon they rode then, leaving the bodies of the three Piutes as a feast for the coyotes and buzzards.

Captain De Villers had watched every move, and as they began to drop out of the party one at a time, with the hoofs of the horses muffled, he said aloud to Texas Kit:

"Oh, but how you do fear Buffalo Bill."

"I must tell him when we meet again."

"You'll never meet again this side the Happy Hunting Grounds," said the Texan angrily.

"While there is life there is hope," was the quiet reply of Captain De Villers.

"But you do tremble even at the name of Buffalo Bill."

"We have reason to, for though he is my foe, I'll give him credit for being the best scout I ever saw."

Texas Kit said no more, and all the pack-horses having been cut out of the herd, the riders began to leave as they could, all making for a rendezvous at the base of a distant mountain.

In three hours after leaving the herd, which continued on, under an outlaw and Little Coyote to Kanab, the party were all assembled at the base of the mountain, and the Navaho chief took the lead as guide into the depths of Kaibob Mountain.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE GOAL REACHED.

THE Navaho chief was a good guide, and he went up the safest trails in the climb of Kaibob Mountain.*

The climb up was a hard one, but when halts were made for rest the view behind them repaid them in its grandeur for their hard work.

Reaching the top of the mountain a halt was made by the shores of a small lake, where were the remains of an Indian village, long since deserted.

The next day through dense forests, natural parks, fertile valleys and scenery that everywhere charmed the eye, the march was kept up until the shadows began to lengthen, when the Navaho guide turned into a vast canyon.

It opened to the southward, was a perfect pasture of the richest grass, was sheltered from the bleak winds and was dotted with beautiful cedars, pines, aspens and other trees.

Several large springs passed out of the rocks, and the retreat was a perfect garden spot, just where the winter could be passed in comfort to the outlaws and their horses.

Such was the goal which the outlaws had reached in the Kaibob Mountains, and for the first time the Texan breathed freely, and Golden Hair was really in a happy mood.

But, for the first time a cloud came over the face of the prisoner, for, after all that had been done to throw Buffalo Bill off the track, could it be possible for mortal man to pick up the lost and divided trails and come on to that wild retreat, where pale-faces had never been known to go before?

There were dry caverns in the cliffs where stores could be kept, plenty of timber to furnish logs for cabins for the winter, and a few weeks of work would leave them nothing more to wish for after the return of the Navaho with the stores for the long, cold months that were to follow.

Having guided the party unerringly to the spot, the Navaho picked out the best horse and started off for Kanab to buy provisions, Golden Hair telling him to purchase them with the money from the sale of the horses, though, in case they might not reach the settlement, she supplied him with other funds in plenty.

The departure of the Navaho chief, with Little Coyote, and one of the outlaws absent with the horses, left the camp with but five persons in it besides the prisoner.

The latter was placed in one of the dry caverns, and, ironed hands and feet, he was helpless, and none realized it more than he did himself.

He seemed to give up all hope of being rescued, and plotted and planned to help himself, for he had not the remotest idea of remaining there if he could get away, be the consequences what they might.

With Sun Eyes, the squaw, to look after the cooking, Golden Hair got the men to work, the prisoner being led out each day to do more than his share, which however he did not regret, as it kept him hardened up for the long tramp which he hoped to be able to take, should he escape.

Trees were chopped down and logs cut, places cleared for the three cabins which were to be built, one for Golden Hair, and the other two to be divided up for the rest of the party.†

A fence was built across the mouth of the canyon, which gave the horses a well-watered pasturage of a couple of hundred acres, and in the time that the Navaho was absent much was done in the way of work about the camp.

Just eight days after the arrival there of the outlaws, the Navaho chief, Little Coyote and the white outlaw returned, bringing with them a dozen well-laden horses, and Golden Hair congratulated herself upon having accomplished at last the aim of her wicked ambition.

"Tremain, the game is now in our hands and we have but to play our final trump card and win."

"To-morrow I will have a talk with De Villers, and after that he is in your hands for you to end his life, for with him in his grave you are Lord Trevor De Villers," and the woman's look was one of wicked triumph.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE DEMAND.

THE day came which was to be Captain De Villers's severest ordeal.

The woman led him, all manacled as he was,

*Kaibob is Indian for buckskin. Named by the Indians on account of the great number of deer found there, which they call buckskins.

—THE AUTHOR.

†Three cabins, now in ruins, still stand in the outlaws' canyon, not far from Point Sublime, Grand Canyon of the Colorado. Buffalo Bill guided the writer and others there in Oct., 1893.—THE AUTHOR.

to a secluded spot in the canyon, where she would be undisturbed, and telling him to be seated said to him:

"Trevor De Villers, do you know why you were kidnapped by me?"

"I do not."

"You wish to know?"

"Well, I cannot say that I do."

"I'll tell you anyhow, for it is necessary for you to know."

"As you please."

"I want your money."

"What money?"

"You have been mining in, or near the Grand Canyon of the Colorado for three years."

"Granted."

"I know that you found gold in good paying quantities and you have it hidden away."

"It is hidden away I admit."

"Ah! how much?"

"I had no scales to weigh it."

"Guess at the amount."

"Say twenty thousand dollars."

"I want it."

"It is not mine."

"Why is it not yours?"

"I gave it away."

"To whom?"

"I offered it to Buffalo Bill, but he refused it, and then I gave it to the old guide and scout, Old Haphazard, who came out in search of me, and two-thirds of it he was to divide among the soldiers and scouts who came out on the same expedition."

"Has he the gold?"

"No."

"Where is it?"

"Where I left it."

"How will he get it?"

"I have given him a map and full directions for finding it."

"When does he intend to go after it?"

"He told me he would go next month."

"Then it is there yet?"

"Unless he has changed his mind and gone sooner."

"Well, you must give up that gold."

"I say no."

"If you do not guide me to where it is, or give the Indian chief directions so that he can go after it and bring it to me, your life will be the forfeit."

"Threats do no good, madam."

"I mean them."

"I do not doubt it."

"Direct the chief, and upon his return you can go free."

"I will not, for it is not now my gold."

"I'll give you another chance."

"Well?"

"I will send you with the chief, yes, go myself with the Texan, and when you reach the hiding-place I will let you go free with your horse, provisions, arms, and guide you to where you will be safe."

"You are very kind."

"You refuse?"

"As before."

"Then you shall die."

"I can die but once."

"You affect not to fear death."

"See here, I wish to live."

"Life is dearer to me to-day than ever before, and yet, if I am called upon to sacrifice it, be it for my country, for a friend, for honor's sake, let me tell you that if you care to see me die, you would find that I did not flinch and could meet my fate with a smile on my face."

The woman uttered an impatient ejaculation and sprung to her feet, pacing to and fro for a moment deeply moved.

At last she came and facing the prisoner looked squarely into his eyes while she asked:

"You remember your father, Lord De Villers?"

"I do, and honor his memory."

"You do not remember your mother?"

"I have a faint remembrance of a beautiful woman whom all told me in later years, was one of the noblest of God's creatures."

"You had a brother?"

"Yes, my eldest brother Duncan, a splendid fellow."

"Do you know that he is dead?"

"Yes, I am aware of his sad end."

"You were on your way back to England to claim your title and estates when I captured you?"

"I was; but what do you know of my family and my actions?"

"Did you ever hear your father speak of one Kate Cassiday?"

Trevor De Villers started, but answered quickly:

"I never heard my father speak of one Kate Cassiday."

"Did you ever hear her name?"

"Yes, I have heard her name."

"What have you heard of her?"

"That she was a beautiful girl, the daughter of a farmer living on the coast, and who risked her life to save my father and others wrecked near her home."

"What else?"

"It was said that an attachment sprung up between my father and Miss Cassiday, and yet he

could not marry her on account of their different stations in life."

"And so married the Lady Eleanor Enders, your mother?"

"Yes."

"And Kate Cassiday?"

"It was said that she married afterward, and I hope happily."

"But how is it that you know so much of my family and the past?"

"I am Kate Cassiday," was the firm reply of the woman.

CHAPTER LXIV. A WOMAN'S HATE.

CAPTAIN DE VILLERS was fairly startled at the utterance of the woman, with the look that accompanied it.

"Do you mean what you say?" he asked, after a pause.

"I do."

"You are Kate Cassiday?"

"I am, or rather was."

"What are you now?"

"The wife of a Mormon of high position, a man whom I deserted because I despised him."

"I had not heard that you married a Mormon."

"Nor did I at first."

"I married a man that loved me, and whom I respected."

"As long as he lived he kept me good, though I never loved him; but when he died I became a convert to Mormonism, and coming to America, bringing my child with me, I married the Mormon I spoke of, and afterward left him, giving all the impression that I was dead."

"My life was a wreck, and your father wrecked it."

"My father? I do not believe it."

"He won my love, he became my ideal, and then he turned from me to wed Lady Eleanor Enders."

"And you still brood over this, and the bitter past?"

"Brood over it? why, I live on it, feed on it, love it, for it all fans my hatred of you."

"And why of me?"

"For your father's sake I hate you."

"You are carrying out the old adage of visiting the sins of the father upon the children."

"I am."

"So be it, if it pleases you."

"It does please me to hate you, and you may understand how little mercy you may expect at my hands."

"Wait until I ask a tigress for mercy."

"You call me a tigress?"

"I do not think that I misnamed you, for perhaps I can tell you that I know you now better than you think."

"You do not know me?"

"Let us see if I cannot unfold a leaf of the past for your mental eye to glance over."

"I am listening."

"You have a daughter?"

The woman's face paled, and she faltered:

"What do you know of my daughter?"

"As we are glancing over the past I will be accurate."

"Your daughter, a beautiful woman, married a Mormon also, but one whom she loved."

"Well?"

"She, with others deemed you dead."

"Yes, I meant that they should do so."

"Your daughter's husband served me well once, and taking me to his home introduced me by my name."

"Your daughter started, paled and afterward seeking me had a confession to make."

"Yes, yes."

"It was not of her sinning, but of yours, for the papers you left gave her the story of your life and so it was that my name startled her so."

The woman bent her head but made no response, and Captain De Villers continued speaking in his easy way:

"I heard from a daughter's lips the story of a mother's shame."

"I heard how her mother, you, Kate Cassiday, had gone as a nurse to the hospital, had nursed my mother at the time of my birth, and had, by the aid of an accomplice whom you bribed, stolen one of the twins, for I am a twin, as you know."

"You kidnapped that child, marked his hand as my father marked mine, and reared him for evil in your accursed revenge against my father."

"We were as alike as we could be, even to our having each one gray and one blue eye, and we must now be counterparts, for he is in prison, under sentence of death for mutiny and murder, and which, under your teaching, he was too ready to be guilty of."

"I was on my way to England when you kidnapped me."

"Why?"

"My friend, Lord Mildmay, who, thank Heaven, escaped you, came here after me, and to save that poor condemned man, whom many believed to be me."

"I am going back to acknowledge him as my twin brother, to tell the queen the whole

story of wrong done him and throw myself upon her mercy to pardon him, so that I can reform his life and make the future for him far different from the past."

The woman again sprung to her feet and paced to and fro.

It was evident that she was most deeply moved.

She saw in the man before her the image of his father, and his words made her feel the more how alike they were.

But she threw off the feeling upon her, cast from her the old love and allowed hate to hold full sway once more.

So she said, while her face grew stern, and her voice hard and brazen:

"Trevor De Villers, you will never see England, for if you refuse to give me the gold you have, you shall die."

"Yes, and if I did yield and give it up to you, your very first act would be to kill me."

"No, Kate Cassiday, I will never trust to a serpent, so do your very worst, and you will find me ready to meet my doom, I only asking that I may send papers home to try and save my poor, unfortunate brother, and give to him the title and estates that I am now the supposed only heir to."

"Now do your worst, Madam Golden Hair the Gold Hunter, the Hermitess, the Avenger, Man of Chance, Woman Renegade or whatever other name you care to be known by."

The woman uttered a scream, and placing her hands over her ears, to shut out his voice, hastened from the spot, leaving him alone; but only for a few minutes, for she quickly regained her composure and sent Texas Kit to take him back to his cavern prison.

CHAPTER LXV. A CHOICE OF DEATH.

It was several days before the Golden Hair again sought the presence of her prisoner.

He was kept in his cavern, so secured to rocks with chains, that escape was impossible.

By day he was made to work hard, and he did it with no remonstrance.

The cabins were quickly put up, the chinks filled in with clay, and the doors made of thinly hewn logs, while among the things brought from Kanab by the Navaho, were small glass window panes for the windows.

Thus it was that in three weeks after their arrival the camp was complete and its people ready to face the rigors of a hard winter, for the nights were cold and snow-storms were threatening.

When Golden Hair did again seek her prisoner for a talk with him, her manner had changed and she was calm and sarcastic.

"I have come for another pleasant chat with you," she said.

"I am at your service, Kate Cassiday."

"How about that gold?"

"I do not understand you."

"Will you direct me so I can get it, or guide me to it?"

"I will not."

"You expect to escape, I suppose?"

"I am watching for any chance I can find to do so."

"You are frank about it."

"If you knew me better you would understand that I always am frank and honest."

"You surely do not now think Buffalo Bill can rescue you?"

"Oh no, I am not looking for him to perform miracles."

"Then you have no hope?"

"None whatever."

"Yet will not save your life by revealing the hiding-place of your gold?"

"It is not mine, and so I will not give it away, or permit you to rob them of it to whom I gave it."

"Then you shall die."

"So you have said before."

"I mean it."

"When is the day set?"

"I will give you just ten days to live from today, so say your prayers."

"No one could ask more time."

"I will be still further generous."

"Well?"

"I will give you your choice of the death you are to die."

"You overwhelm me with kindness, but really I have little choice, never having been called upon to die yet."

"There may be a choice between being shot, hanged or—"

"Or what?"

"Given over to the red-skins to torture to death, for I half promised Bad Buffalo that I would send you back to him to die by the refinement of cruelty he can invent with his cunning nature and Indian heart."

"Now that strikes me favorably."

The woman regarded him with amazement.

"Why, yes, for I am studying the Indian character with a great deal of interest, and I could learn so much if I was the object of their attentions in a war or scalp dance, don't you see?"

"Do you mean that you would choose such a death?"

"I do mean it, and that shall be my choice."

The woman's eyes flashed and she said in her fierce way:

"I see your motive, sir."

"What is it?"

"You hope you will get a chance to escape in being taken to the Indian village of Chief Bad Buffalo."

"You read me like a book."

"But you shall not, for I will decide how you are to die."

"After giving me my choice?"

"Yes."

"Well, you have the power, yes, and the merciless heart to do anything, in fact I believe you are as cruel as the tigress I called you."

"But it is my funeral, your game, so play it to please you and I will be content."

The woman was again enraged.

His cool, sarcastic manner, his utter indifference to all threats of death, and his way of talking to her fairly upset her and took her nerve away.

She had more than met her match, and was forced to admit it to herself.

The story she had told Tremain and the Texan about wishing information and papers from him was false, for her aim was only to get the knowledge of where his gold was hidden.

The gold she had robbed the coach of they hidden, she and Tremain, and in spite of the riches she expected to secure in England, she wanted more, and his refusal enraged her.

Promising him life if he would confess its place of concealment, she yet would have shown him no mercy had he done so.

CHAPTER LXVI. THE TRUE STORY.

FROM the presence of the prisoner Golden Hair went very much disappointed.

She had failed to force from him a confession of where his gold was hidden, she had discovered that he already knew of his twin-brother being stolen infancy, but that he believed him to still be in an English prison under the death sentence.

Having become angered at the words and manner of her captive, at his utter disregard of death and her threats, the woman made her way down the canyon in search of Tremain.

The Englishman wore his mask still, notwithstanding the fact that the prisoner was not where he could see him.

"Keep it on, for there is no need of the others seeing your resemblance to De Villers until it can do no harm," she said to him, and he obeyed, as he always did everything she told him to do.

She found Tremain smoking his pipe before his cabin, and as she approached he saw that she disturbed and asked:

"What is it, Golden Hair?"

"I have had a talk with De Villers."

"Well?"

"He laughs at all my threats, or rather scorns them."

"What threats did you make to him?"

"I threatened him with death within ten days unless he told me where his gold was hidden."

"And he refused?"

"He did."

"What does he say?"

"That he gave the gold away and so will not give it up to me."

"Not to save his life?"

"No."

"It is a pity, for we heard that he had considerable gold hidden away."

"That is not the worst of it."

"What is?"

"Well, he knew me as the woman who had loved his father and now sought revenge upon him, but it did not bother him in the least."

"I gave him his choice of death, and do you know he chose to be tortured by red-skins."

"The man is crazy."

"No, he simply has a nerve that nothing will shake."

"But I came to you for a purpose."

"What is it?"

"To make a confession to you."

"I hate confessions."

"But it concerns you."

"That might interest me then."

"I feel that it will, for I have a true story to tell you, after I make known to you what I have decided upon."

"About what?"

"His death."

"Yes."

"I have decided that he must die within ten days."

"So soon?"

"So soon, perhaps sooner, for something may arise that we may wish him out of the way."

"You have given up all expectation of an attack from Buffalo Bill?"

"Long ago."

"You think that he is not on our trail?"

"He cannot be."

"Sometimes, however, from what I have heard of him, I dread that he may turn up."

"Nonsense, never here; but I have decided how De Villers is to die."

"How?"

"You are to be his executioner."

"I am. How?"

"You are to shoot him."

"Come, Golden Hair, I don't like this cool way of killing a man."

"Well you are the one to most profit by his death, and you must kill him."

"Of course, if it can't be otherwise done; but why cannot the Indian do the work, for they love that kind of work you know."

"You must be the one."

"All right, I will not shrink from it; but what is the confession you have to make me?"

"It is about your parentage."

"Can you tell me anything?"

"Yes, everything."

"I was once so unfortunate as to fear that you were really my mother."

"You were wrong."

"Who is?"

"You have been struck with your striking resemblance to Captain De Villers?"

"Yes, we are most deucedly alike, I think."

"Well, you are his brother."

"Woman, you lie," and Villers Tremain turned upon her almost savagely.

"Let us see if I do," she said quietly.

"The Lady Eleanor gave birth to twins, boys they were, and I was her nurse."

"I had only one assistant, it was a night of terrible storm and the physician did not arrive until the next day."

"One of those twins I took away from the mother, and she never knew she had two sons then instead of one."

"I hid the little one away from the elegant home and began to rear and care for it."

"That little boy was yourself, Villers Tremain."

"It is false."

"It is true, for you have one gray eye and one blue eye, while you are the counterpart of your brother in face, hair, beard, size and voice."

"And you dare tell me this after the curse you put upon me of an evil life?"

"I wanted my revenge upon your father."

"And you mean that I am half heir with my brother to the estates?"

"I mean that you go back as whole heir, that you shall rule all, and you can only do this by his death, and, as you are the most benefited you must be the one to put the sole object in your path out of the way."

The man did not answer immediately, but walked to and fro, his bearing that of one who was struggling with deep emotion.

"In ten days he dies, Tremain, and not until I see him in his grave will I rest content, for then only will I feel that you can claim your own."

"Now go to him, tell him you are appointed his executioner and that he has but ten days to live."

"Tell him that you are to send a bullet through his heart, the second shot, the first wounding him, and then you will tell him a secret so that he may die with a knowledge of who his executioner is—now go."

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE BROTHERS.

THE woman had so worked herself up, over what had passed between her and her captive, and afterward having to confess to Tremain just what the relationship existing between himself and Captain De Villers was, that she almost lost her nerve.

At the command of the woman Tremain walked rapidly away.

He bent his steps up the canyon to the cavern where his brother was a prisoner.

As he drew near he walked more slowly, and at last, influenced by the feelings that crowded upon him, he came to a halt.

For some time he stood thus, apparently undecided what to do.

At last he boldly walked into the cavern and stood gazing in silence upon the prisoner.

Trevor De Villers was lying upon a blanket, manacles upon his feet and hands, the former fastened to a chain that went around a large rock, and was padlocked to them so that he had only a few yards space to move about in.

His bronzed face was calm and fearless, and he looked up in silence into the masked face that was bent upon him.

"De Villers, I have come to have a talk with you," said the outlaw.

"I have just had one affliction, must I suffer another?"

"Golden Hair, you mean?"

"Yes."

"She gave you some news, I believe?"

"Yes; she said that I was to die in just ten days."

"What reason did she give for wishing to put you to death?"

"A combination of reasons. One was because I would not give her some gold that I had already given away."

"Another reason, please?"

"She had a grievance against my father, and wished to visit it upon me."

"Well, are you ready to beg for your life?"

"Not in a thousand years," was the most emphatic response.

"And you prefer death rather than come to the terms of the Golden Hair?"

"I do."

"You will, I learn, be the heir to a proud title and vast estate upon your return to England, should you be allowed to go."

"I would be the acknowledged heir in the eyes of the world."

"And not the real heir?"

"In part, yes."

"What do you mean?"

"What interest is it of yours to know?"

"A great deal, so please tell me."

"I have a brother."

"If an elder brother he would be the heir."

"He is a twin brother."

"Ah! where is he?"

"Alas! poor fellow, he lies in prison under sentence of death, and it has been my greatest dread since I became your prisoner, that I could not reach England in time to save him."

"What is he under death sentence for?"

"As well as I can learn he is a sailor, and he led a mutiny on board ship, which resulted in his captain's death."

"How can you save him, a mutineer?"

"I can appeal to the queen for his life."

"She will not listen to you."

"She is just and she will hear me, for I have served her well, and I ask no honors at her hands only to pardon my brother."

"She will refuse, after his crime."

"I will tell her that he was stolen from my mother's side on the night of his birth, that he was carried away in revenge, and that the avenger did all in her power to raise him to a life of crime that she might see a proud name lowered in the dust."

"I will tell her Majesty, that, thus reared to look upon evil as virtue, the poor lad was made wicked by the teachings of this bad woman, and that he is deserving of clemency on account of being thus trained."

"I will tell her that if she will pardon him I will vouch for his future, that he shall share with me my inheritance, and that he will prove in the end his appreciation of her kind act."

"And if she should refuse?"

"I can do no more than to comfort the last hours of my poor brother, whom, though I have never seen, I cannot but feel the deepest sympathy for, and the regard of near kinship."

"And you will be scorned by many as being the brother of a mutineer, a murderer, a man who died upon the gallows."

"I can stand the scorn of any man or woman who can bestow it upon me from such a reason."

"De Villers," and the outlaw spoke impressively.

"Yes, Tremain."

"I look upon you as a noble man and I have something to say to you, something of much import to me."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

AN OUTLAW'S HONOR.

THERE was something in the manner in which the outlaw spoke that impressed Trevor De Villers, and he looked up at the masked face and replied:

"Say all that you like; but why do you hide your face?"

"I will tell you in good time."

"But now I wish you to answer me several questions and not grow impatient."

"All right, I will."

"What do you know of this woman, Golden Hair?"

"No more than that she is the one that sought revenge upon my parents, kidnapped my unfortunate brother and now seeks my life because I will not give her my hard-earned gold."

"Do you know if you would be able to recognize your twin brother?"

"I think so."

"By what means?"

"Lord Mildmay told me that he is just my height, weight and bearing."

"That he has, as I have, one gray and one blue eye, our voices are similar in tone and more, he has pricked into the palm of his hand just what I have in mine."

"It was done in my hand by my father, with India ink and is the coat-of-arms of our house; but it was done in my brother's hand by that woman, Kate Cassidy, who had a view to future devilry in the act."

"De Villers?"

"Yes."

"I have told you that I believe you are a noble man."

"Thanks."

"I appreciate that compliment from an outlaw and one who is to be my executioner."

"I wish to ask you if your brother appeared before you here, now, say, having escaped from prison, what would your actions toward him be?"

"I would pledge him half my estate and going to England try to get his pardon from the queen."

"You say that your brother resembles you?"

"So Lord Mildmay and that woman asserted."

"Look into my face now and see if you note any resemblance."

As he spoke the outlaw removed the mask and the start that Captain De Villers gave showed that he did note a striking resemblance.

It was as though he was looking into a mirror at himself, save for the stamp of crime that rested upon the countenance of the outlaw.

"Who are you?" asked De Villers in a voice that was low and earnest.

"Look and see if I have not one blue eye and one gray eye."

"Great God! can this be an accidental resemblance, a coincidence, or—"

"Or what?"

"Or has my brother really escaped from prison and are you he?"

"Look into the palm of my hand and see if I do not bear there the brand that you do in yours."

"My God! it is so, and there is no doubt as to who you are."

"Yes, I feel, I know that you are my brother, and Heaven be praised that you escaped the death penalty that was hanging over you, the ignominious doom to which you were sentenced, and it shall be my duty, my brother, to have you pardoned that the stain may be taken from off your life."

"Here is my hand as a pledge, manacled though it is."

The outlaw stood with bowed head and pale face.

He did not take the out-stretched hand, but said in a choking voice:

"And you are the one I was freed by that woman from prison to come over here with her and kill?"

"You are the one she hunted down, made captive, and I have, as her accomplice, made you suffer as you have?"

"But believe me, not until to-day, an hour ago, did I know, Trevor, brother Trevor, that you were my brother, only dreaming our resemblance an accidental one."

"It was her plot to put you out of the way, have me kill you, and then, as Trevor De Villers, return to England and claim title and estates."

"But she overshot the mark when she told me the true story of what you are to me, for she will find that, outlaw though I am, I have honor, and that such a brother as you have proven yourself to be shall meet only protection, not death, at my hands, ay, I will offer my life to defend you from her cruel hand and those of her crime-stained accomplices, for at last the true blood in me asserts itself, and I bow down in the dust with shame at my past life of crime."

"Will you take my hand now, brother Trevor?"

"Gladly."

The two hands were clasped in one firm grasp, one manacled, yet the hand of a man of honor, the other free of iron chains, yet one that was stained with crimes untold.

But as the two brothers stood thus with clasped hands, neither speaking in the depth of their emotion, they failed to see a form crouching behind the rocks outside of the cavern, and both turned as the words rung out:

"Traitor! Coward! You have dared betray me and thwart my plot for name and fortune, by failing to do your duty."

"Behold! I have, no fear to kill, and so send a bullet through his heart and remove him from your path; ay, I make you Lord De Villers by this death-shot!"

It was Golden Hair, and as she spoke she threw her revolver forward and pulled trigger.

With a quick movement the outlaw brother threw himself before Trevor De Villers and with the report of the revolver sunk at his feet.

"I saved you, Trevor," he gasped, and then quickly raising himself on one arm he cried, as he drew his revolver:

"Woman, you taught me crime, and now I will do the worst deed of my life—kill a woman!"

At his words she uttered a wild scream and turned to fly for her life.

Her nerve seemed to desert her all of a sudden, as though she realized that there was no escape for her, that she must die by that avenging hand.

She took a few steps and then stood swaying to and fro, as though about to fall, her face turned toward the man whom her bullet had brought down, her eyes full of piteous pleading to Trevor De Villers to save her while her lips were mute.

But, chained as he was he could not save her, his brother was beyond his reach and the bullet of the avenging outlaw went driving into the heart of the guilty woman, who fell dead at the feet of her prisoner.

CHAPTER LXIX.

HELD AT BAY.

THE outlaw fugitives, under their desperate woman leader, Golden Hair, the Gold Huntress, having reached their retreat, and felt that they were there safe from their untiring trailers, I will now return to those who had dared death and every hardship to track them to their doom and rescue, while punishing them, the gallant English officer who was their prisoner.

Having passed along for miles without seeing a foe, though really in the Navaho country, Buffalo Bill was hoping that they might, by great chance, escape observation until they had gotten down into the Moqui country, for both Lieutenant Ames and the scout believed that at the *Mesa La Vega*, the rendezvous appointed for the supplies to meet them, they would find at least a score of soldiers, and several scouts as an escort, and they would be a great addition to their command.

The fresh trail they had come upon, heading toward the San Juan, Buffalo Bill felt confident was that of the outlaws, and, after consultation it was decided to send the scout, Little Rebel, to the mesa, to bring the force there, with the supplies, to a point on the Colorado River, directly west of where they then were.

Little Rebel went rapidly on his mission, while the little party of braves soon after found themselves pursued by a number of mounted warriors.

Instantly Lieutenant Ames ordered half of his soldiers to hold the rear, while the balance moved to the front, leaving the "dummies" in the center with the pack-animals and prisoners, the scouts serving as flankers.

As the warriors pressed forward a well-directed volley was fired, which emptied half a dozen saddles, and brought down as many ponies, while the shots of the red-skins fell far short.

"We have half a dozen rifles along, lieutenant, that will lay far over those carbines in distance, so we can give those fellows another surprise when they think they have about got the range of our guns," said Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, we can keep them at bay, if we do not find they have set an ambush for us," was the answer.

"I will go ahead and look out for that, sir, while Surgeon Powell remains with you.

"If they crowd you too hard, remember we have old Bad Buffalo and Bending Bow as hostages."

"Yes, we'll keep them at bay with them, if we have to," was Lieutenant Ames's answer and he devoted his attention to the retreat in good order and at a quick pace, while Buffalo Bill rode on ahead with the renegade prisoner Red Scalp.

Thus the running fight was kept up, the Indians charging up again until they got another valley, and a third time when they thought they had discovered the exact range of the carbines, to get another surprise when the long-range rifles opened upon them.

But toward evening, when men and horses were both very tired, Buffalo Bill reported a large force in ambush ahead.

A halt was at once ordered, and Surgeon Powell, who spoke the language well, volunteered to ride forward under a white flag and parley with the red-skins.

All watched the brave surgeon as he rode forward, waving his handkerchief in one hand and holding the other above his head.

Seeing that they were discovered, that they were known to be in ambush, the Indians revealed themselves, though not their full force, and two chiefs were seen to ride forth to meet the Surgeon Scout.

Seeing this Buffalo Bill also rode forward so that they would be two and two.

For half an hour the Surgeon Scout, with Buffalo Bill in his rear covering the two chiefs, held a pow-wow with them, and then he called out:

"Cody, request Lieutenant Ames to show Bad Buffalo, Red Scalp the Renegade and Bending Bow, so that these Indians may know that I am telling them the truth, and if they do not draw off their braves, we will kill their big chief and the others right before their faces."

Buffalo Bill repeated the words to Lieutenant Ames and he at once had the three prisoners led to the front.

A wild yell went along the Indian line at sight of their chief and the others in the hands of the pale-faces, and then another talk followed between Powell and the two chiefs.

When it was finished the chiefs rode away while Surgeon Powell remained where he had been during the council.

Then the Indians were seen to begin to draw off, and in fifteen minutes not a red-skin was visible ahead.

Motioning for the command to come on, the surgeon explained to Lieutenant Ames and Buffalo Bill that he had told them they would scalp their prisoners unless they withdrew from their post, that they meant no harm to them, but were going on in chase of bad white men, and their warriors could follow at a safe distance behind until they came up with their friends, soldiers who were waiting for them over on the Colorado, meaning the escort of the supplies.

When they did so they would release their prisoners unharmed to return to them.

As they could do nothing else, and dreading an ignominious death to their head chief, the two sub-chiefs agreed to the terms, especially as they thought each dummy was a mounted soldier.

Thus it was, retreating rapidly the little band passed on until a night camp was made, when half the force stood guard at a time.

The next morning the march was renewed, Buffalo Bill still upon the trail of the outlaws.

And so it went on, the soldiers going slowly now, until the San Juan was reached and the trail led down the Colorado.

It was a march of terrible suspense to all, but at last the tired but plucky men came in sight of a clump of timber in which men and horses were visible, and dashing out of it came a scout waving a United States flag.

Loudly the men cheered and cheer answered cheer, while the following red-skins, though hundreds in number not knowing the force in the timber, halted and formed to await the ordeal.

"How many men?" called out Buffalo Bill, as the scout dashed up.

"Lieutenant Tompkins and twenty cavalrymen, with five scouts, including Old Harry Haphazard, who took the message on to the fort when I met him and told him how matters were here."

"Good for you, and bravo for Old Harry, for he'll never desert the trail until Captain De Villers is rescued," and he reported what the scout had said, to Lieutenant Ames, who asked:

"Now about the prisoners, Cody?"

"We will have a talk before Bad Buffalo, sir, pretending that a regiment with a cannon is following, and then let him go, keeping the renegade."

"They will be only too glad to get away, and the report of a regiment coming with a gun, will scare them back to their village," added the Surgeon Scout.

The suggestion of Buffalo Bill was carried out, and then Bad Buffalo and Bending Bow were set free with a warning to at once lead their braves off if they wished to escape from the coming regiment.

Bad Buffalo kept up his dignity to the end, but he was undoubtedly one to take advice and in an hour if one Indian was around he was not visible.

Joining forces with Lieutenant Tompkins, a dashing, handsome young cavalry officer, Lieutenant Ames decided to keep on the march to reach the crossing of the Colorado as soon as possible, for the outlaw trail led in that direction.

When after a slow march the crossing was reached, Old Harry Haphazard started off in search of the Mormon ferryman.

CHAPTER LXX. TO THE BITTER END.

THE Mormon ferryman was found, and said that he would put the force across on the following morning, so a camp was made for the night upon the banks of the Colorado.

The next morning the crossing was begun, but it was slow work, as the horses were taken across, four at a time, not to fatigue them the more by a long hard swim, and run the chances of losing a number of them.

With the friendship he felt for Captain De Villers, John Lee was anxious to aid in the overtaking of the outlaws, though he did not wish to see the woman, Golden Hair, made a prisoner.

Still he wished to serve De Villers and so told just what force had gone over and the story told regarding the prisoner they had with them, while he added:

"You will find them, I think, at the home of the man Golden Hair," for he did not wish to say that he knew her to be a woman.

After another night's rest the lieutenant pushed on, and being compelled to travel slowly on account of both horses and men it was the afternoon of the second day after leaving the river before they, following the trail, came upon the burned cabin of Golden Hair.

This put them all in a quandary, to which the bodies of the Piutes, torn by coyotes, and the tracks of a large number of horses added.

"Lieutenant Ames, there may have been red work here, and it may all be a trick, so we must go slow, sir."

"What would you advise, Cody?"

"That you go into camp here, sir, for a perfect rest, while Surgeon Powell and I reconnoiter the situation and surroundings fully."

This was decided upon and the next morning the Surgeon Scout and Buffalo Bill started out upon the trail of Golden Hair's ponies.

The trail led to Kanab, and they arrived there not half a day after the departure of the Navaho chief, Little Coyote and the outlaw, on their way to Kaibob Mountain.

What they discovered was that the ponies had been sold to a Mr. Woolley, a Mormon elder, and who also kept the only store in Kanab.

From Elder Woolley they learned that the three had purchased a large quantity of supplies, blankets and ammunition, and packing them on ponies, had gone off on a southerly trail, where they reported their camp was, the white outlaw professing to be a missionary among the Indians.

"Frank," said Buffalo Bill, as the two rode out of Kanab the next day on the trail of the outlaws. "When we reach the end of this trail we will find that our work is done."

"I agree with you," was the response of the Surgeon Scout.

Then the two held on until the trail led up to

the summit of Kaibob Mountain and Buffalo Bill said:

"Frank, it's a long trail for you to take, but those fellows have gone here into the mountains to winter."

"You are right."

"And Lieutenant Ames must bring his command here."

"Say the original command, Bill, for they will be enough to handle the outlaws, and there are too many pack-animals to bring all."

"I guess you are right, it will be best to come in marching trim, and if you will go after them, bringing them here, I will push on up into the mountain, locate the outlaw camp and return here to meet you."

"Just the thing, and I'll be off in the morning."

The next morning while Surgeon Powell started for the camp of Lieutenant Ames, Buffalo Bill went on, following the trail up into Kaibob Mountain.

But the Surgeon Scout met with bad luck in the falling of his horse, before he had gone half a dozen miles, and having to shoot the animal on account of a broken leg.

But hanging his bridle and saddle upon a tree he continued on his way on foot, arriving at the ruined home of Golden Hair the afternoon of his third day's tramp.

He was greeted back with a cheer, for all were becoming anxious for the safety of the two brave friends, and at dawn the next morning Lieutenant Ames, leaving the camp in the command of Lieutenant Tompkins, started off with his original force, excepting that Old Harry Haphazard went along, the Surgeon Scout acting as guide.

When they arrived at the rendezvous Buffalo Bill was awaiting them anxiously, wondering at the delay, and reported that he had found the outlaws' retreat.

"We can readily reach there in a day's march, sir, from the top of the mountain, where we can find a good camping-ground for to-night, with good water and grass in plenty."

Camping that night on the summit of Kaibob Mountain the march was begun the next morning for the outlaws' retreat.

CONCLUSION.

To the bitter end was the outlaw trail followed by Lieutenant Ames and his gallant men, guided by Buffalo Bill, and little did Golden Hair dream, when she sent a bullet at Villers Tremain, that there were avengers on her path; yes, even then dashing into the mouth of the canyon a quarter of a mile below.

Texas Kit was the first to behold them, and preferring death by the bullet rather than the rope, he gave the alarm and stood his ground, to fall dead under the fire of Buffalo Bill, while the other two white outlaws, with the Navaho, his wife and Little Coyote, made a desperate stand to beat back their foes.

But those yelling, clanging horsemen were not to be stayed, though a scout, a soldier, and several horses went down, and the little band of outlaws were ridden down, while the victors swept on up the canyon to rescue the noble man they had pledged themselves to save or die in the attempt, Lord Mildmay riding by the side of Lieutenant Ames, and the two keeping abreast of Buffalo Bill and the Surgeon Scout, with Old Harry yelling like a demon close behind.

And the rescue was made, but what a sight met their view as they came upon the scene where the manacled prisoner stood, with the dead body of his brother and Golden Hair at his feet.

And what a story they heard from his lips, when the manacles were taken off, and willing hands offered to give the outlawed brother honorable burial when they heard the sad story of his life.

There in that wild canyon he that was known as Villers Tremain found honorable burial, while apart from him Golden Hair and the others were also decently interred.

Adown the valley, where they had fallen, the scout and soldier found graves, and this duty done to the dead, as the lowering clouds betokened a storm, Buffalo Bill urged an immediate retreat from the mountain, for a snow storm there meant a winter's stay or death.

So back on the trail the pledged pals of Buffalo Bill wended their way, picking up Lieutenant Tompkins and his men on the way, crossing the Colorado, and recovering the hidden gold of Captain De Villers, and thence on once more to the fort, where every officer and soldier had given them up for lost.

A short stay at the fort was made, and then once more Captain De Villers and Lord Mildmay took the homeward trail across land, and sea, back to old England, where warm hearts bid them welcome, the warmest of all coming from Lady May of Moorlands, now the wife of Lord Trevor De Villers, who will never forget the hero among men—"Buffalo Bill of The Winning Hand."

THE END.

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Old Night-Hawk, the Crook Shadower

By William G. Patten.